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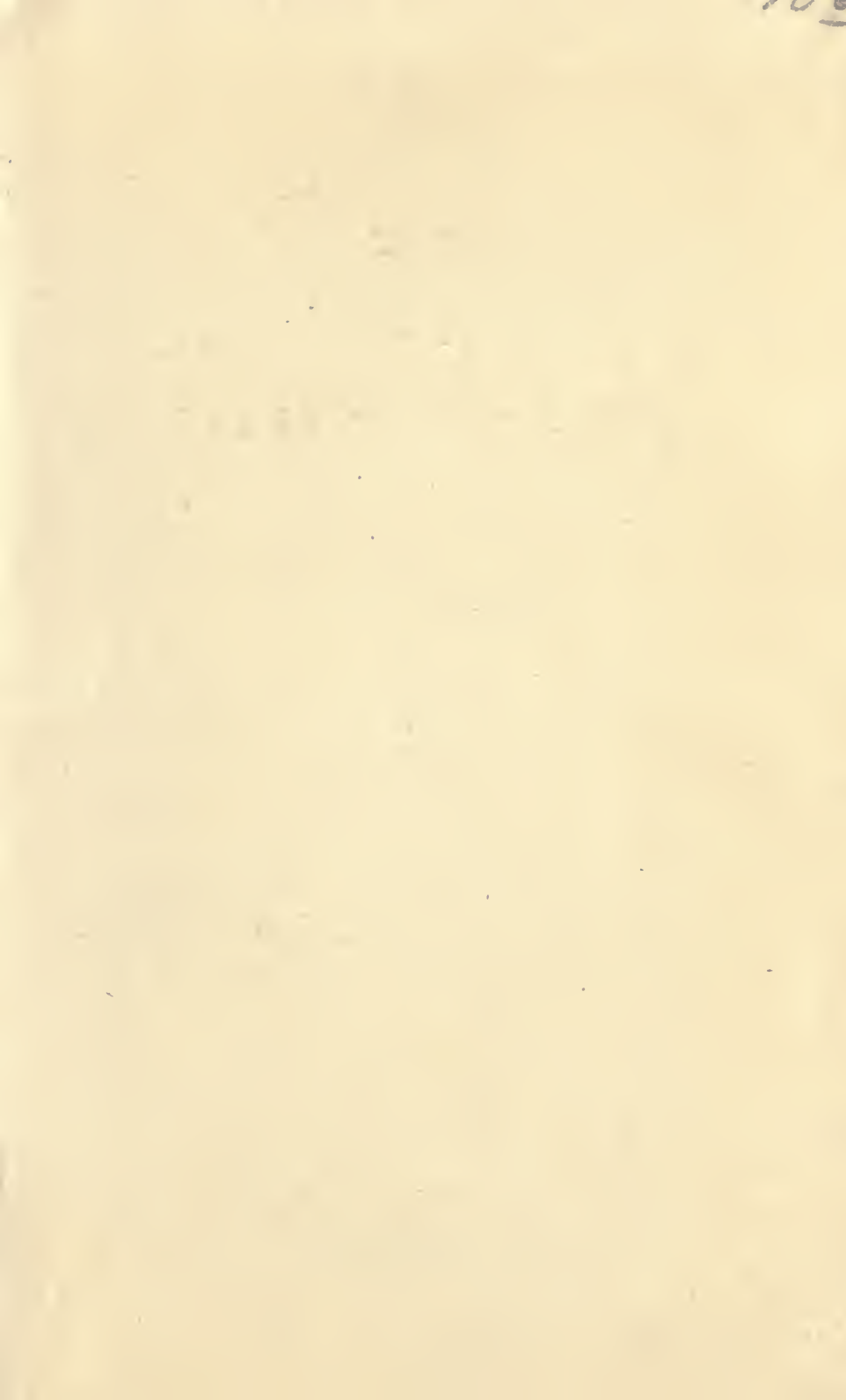




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PEN TO SILVERSHEET

BY
MELVIN M. RIDDLE

A comprehensive digest of the many arts and crafts involved in the fascinating industry—motion picture production—and a visionary journey through a large model studio, describing in detail the various operations in the making of a picture, from the writing of the scenario to the final presentation of the photoplay on the theatre screen.

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FOREWORD



OW, we're going to make a motion picture!

We shall take an imaginary trip around the model studio and with our mind's eye, shall follow the work of the world's fifth largest, and the most fascinating art-industry, from its very inception to its final completion—from the choice and preparation of the scenario to the final exhibition of the finished photoplay on the screen of the cinema palace. We shall make the journey from Pen to Silversheet.

This journey is a fascinating one. It will explore the hitherto undescribed mysteries of the work of film production and lay bare the inner mechanisms of this wonderful and intricate art, which comprises within itself, many arts and many crafts, peculiarly identified therewith and many of which have come into existence only since the establishment of this new industry.

"How do they do it?" is the question on the lips of the average spectator as he watches the shadow story unfold before him on the screen. He is curious to know details, facts, and processes by which certain results are secured. But he little realizes, perhaps, the extensiveness of the ramifications of the work which has resulted in the finished product which is flashed before his vision. Perhaps he thinks in terms of camera, actors, director and backgrounds. But in so thinking, his knowledge only covers about one-fifth of the various and varied factors which contribute their necessary efforts to the one central, ultimate aim. He has not yet been given an inside look at the work and the mechanism of these various factors.

In the journey from Pen to Silversheet, all will be told, presented and explained. When the germ idea for a motion picture starts to undergo development towards its final completed state, it is as if a magic button were pressed which

instantly sets in motion these many contributing factors—these cogs in the large, organized machine. Each is at once active, and if one is rendered inactive, the entire machinery is thrown out of motion. Complete harmony and smooth-running unison are necessary. Each department bears a close relation to every other individual department or cog in the machine, and each is vitally important to its perfect operation. In the present advanced stage of the development of this great art-industry, each of these contributing factors has been perfected to a fine state. Progress is a natural law, which this, as all other great institutions, has been governed by.

In exploring this vast and intricate cinema production machine, let us begin with the story and scenario. The story is the germ nucleus of the motion picture. With the selection and preparation of the story, all departments are set in motion. Before the selection and preparation of the story, nothing can be started. The story and scenario are the prime, the first determining factors in the production of a motion picture—and the ones upon which all others depend and to which they react. They constitute the fly-wheel of our organized machine.

THE AUTHOR.



CHAPTER I

THE STORY AND SCENARIO



DISCUSSION of the story and scenario involves several issues. These are:

FIRST: The story—what it is and the circumstances governing its selection.

SECOND: The sources from which original stories for photoplay use are obtained.

THIRD: The manner in which an author conceives and develops an original story idea for the screen.

FOURTH: The amateur scenario writer problem—the principal shortcomings of the average amateur who submits his scenario, how they should be overcome, what is wanted by scenario departments and some helpful discussion as to what are the qualifications of a successful writer and, providing he possesses those qualifications, pointers on how he should prepare his ideas for submission to scenario departments.

FIFTH: The development of the scenario from the original by trained studio writers, what the scenario consists of and its importance to further production work.

The very first step in the production of a motion picture is the selection of the story. A motion picture, in the early days, was merely a film record of some kind of motion. Hence the name, "motion pictures." But, in its present state of development, the motion picture is a drama or comedy or tragedy told by action and expression—ideas conveyed by means of expression, from the players to the audience.

The story, therefore, is paramount—the foundation upon which the picture is built—the central idea of which the completed production is only an objectification.

The selection of this story is therefore of the utmost

importance. If the story be weak the picture will be accordingly more or less weak. The story must be selected with extreme care, keeping in mind its adaptability to the screen and the pulse of the public taste—a very changeable thing—at the particular time intended for the production of the picture.

Regarding the latter point—there was a time, several years ago when the costume picture, generally some historical story or one in which numerous gaily-costumed characters were employed, held full sway on the screen and was very popular with the public. Then followed a period when the public tired of costume pictures and there were a few failures. Then followed a period of war pictures, but the public taste also tired of that and they were soon under the producer's ban. And now, it seems, another period of costume pictures is dawning. This illustrates the changeableness of the public taste.

In the production of film stories, there are two systems now in vogue which govern the selection of the story to be produced. These are the star system and the all-star or non-star system. If a story is to be chosen for a star, the story must of necessity be such that there is one character who stands out more than all others—who predominates and holds the major portion of the interest. This character must be fitted in type and personality to the star for whom the story is intended.

In case the story is being selected for an all-star picture, it must be a story strong in theme and situation, in which all the characters are important. There may be one who is slightly more important than the others, but not so much more so as in the case of the star picture. In a picture of this kind, the story is the main issue and it is not presented with a view to the exploitation of any one character over all the others.

Let us take up the second point outlined in the beginning of this chapter—the sources from which original stories for photoplay use are obtained.

In their selection of the story, several fields are open to producers: Originals, written by outside contributors and sent to the studio for consideration; published novels, produced plays, published short fiction in current periodicals and originals

written by successful authors, many of whom are now devoting a goodly portion of their time to such work. In the past few years the tendency on the part of producers to use material from published plays, novels and short stories, has been very strong, but many now entertain the conviction that the original is coming into its own. History always repeats itself and all things run in cycles as if by a law of Nature. The same rule seems to apply to the case in point. Several years ago nothing was produced but originals. Then came the tendency to produce legitimate plays, novels and short stories—published or enacted material. This is still being largely done, but published material does not entirely hold the floor as once it did. A great many originals are now being produced.

As already noted, the originals come from two sources—outside contributors, the majority of whom are amateurs who simply “try their hand” at writing a scenario without realizing the import of what they have undertaken, and from professional writers who have proven by their past works either as playwrights, novelists or short magazine story writers, their ability to conceive a good story plot. The percentage of stories accepted from outside contributors is very small—perhaps a dozen out of every ten or fifteen thousand. These contributors—the amateur scenario writers—will be fully discussed when the fourth point in the beginning of this chapter is reached.

The professional writers referred to are known in the various producing organizations as “eminent authors” or by other similar titles. The number of authors, playwrights, etc., who are now interested in original screen work, include many of the most noted, such as Rex Beach, Harold Bell Wright, Thomas Dixon, Sir Gilbert Parker, Rupert Hughes, Robert Chambers, Elinor Glyn, W. Somerset Maugham, Edward Knoblock, Samuel Merwin, Elmer Harris, Sir James M. Barrie, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Avery Hopwood, Robert Hitchens, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Joseph Conrad and numerous others.

A few years ago established authors and playwrights, such as those mentioned above, were reluctant to write for the screen, or even to allow their works to be picturized. This

was due, perhaps, to their lack of faith in the screen and the future of the motion picture industry as an artistic institution, and also because of the fact that stories were then often "murdered" or mutilated beyond recognition by irresponsible producers, the type of which could not continue in business today because of the demands of a discriminating public. The status of the motion picture industry today, however, and the dignity of the profession is such that authors have been won over and have seriously considered the startling fact that whereas perhaps five hundred thousand people read a good seller, on the other hand, millions of people will see their story on the screen. These authors are, many of them, working right in the studios where they can acquire the peculiar technique of writing for the screen and become accustomed to the requirements of this particular branch of literature.

Taking up the third subdivision stated in the beginning of the chapter, let us attempt to present some inkling of the manner in which an author conceives and develops an original story idea for the screen. This, based on interviews with authors who have described just how they secured and built up their screen plots, will doubtless be helpful to many of my readers who aspire to become photoplaywrights.

Very few writers have ever tried to discuss such a question. Many times they do not remember exactly how the original idea was suggested to them and often the development of that idea into a story was a matter of months. Often a story grows so gradually in the mind of an author that when he finally awakens to the fact that he has a story, he possibly cannot trace the various stages in its development.

A prominent playwright and screen writer, however, once narrated just how she came to write a certain photoplay and the processes of mental development which it underwent before it finally became a reality. This particular author was one who considers the theme the most important point in a story. Others write more from a plot or character standpoint. Her theme, in this particular instance, was the paternal love of an old stage-doorkeeper of the "has-been" actor type, many of which are to be found in large cities, and his hungry desire to lavish this love upon someone, someone who would in turn

listen to his stories of near-greatness in the past and would seriously believe what he might have been. She was inspired with this theme by a short chat with just such an old character.

"There was something about him so tremendously pathetic," she declared, "so human and so lonely. His hopes of greatness, now a memory, his greatest comfort lay in telling to those who gathered about him between cues, stories of himself, his past, how near he came to greatness and what might have been if this, that, or the other hadn't happened—if Fate had only smiled upon him instead of frowning.

"My policy in writing has always been to build up situations from character instead of getting the situation and then casting about for a character to fit it. In this way, stories are more life-like and natural as we get interesting people and then let them live interesting lives as they would naturally live them.

"This character of the old stage-doorkeeper, I had long cherished in my mind and I wanted to work out a story which would give him the love and admiration that he had always hungered for but had never received. A producer made the remark to me: 'I wish you would write a story for me with a protective theme—a story that shows the love of a man for a child.' It occurred to me then and there that my old stage-doorkeeper was the very subject for such a theme. Immediately I fell to musing. Who could the child be which the old man could love and what would be the circumstances which surrounded her? As I meditated, the answer came. She should be a little chorus girl who should come to the city to achieve fame and success and who would be sympathetic with him, would believe his stories of how he almost became the world's greatest actor—who would be just as lonely and just as hungry for love as he was. My story was now well started in my mind and I mused and just visualized those characters, added a few more and let them act in my mind as they most naturally would, under such circumstances, in real life. Then came another love—the false love of the rich 'angel' of the show. The story grew and grew—just naturally developed in my mind and soon I had reached the point where the old man, to save the girl from the primrose path, under the influence of this other love, was willing to give his own life. This

willingness, which he demonstrated, awakened the girl to the priceless paternal love which he held for her and brought her out of the maze which was enveloping her better senses, also awakening the other man to a noble appreciation of true womanhood and converting his false love into a noble, true love of the girl, which she later accepts, as his wife."

The above narration by the photoplaywright of just how this story—a story subsequently produced as a motion picture—developed in her mind is a striking example of how authors create and develop original ideas.

And now we come to the fourth subdivision above noted—the amateur scenario writer problem. Let us digress a moment in our journey from Pen to Silversheet and consider this interesting problem. On this subject a volume could be written, but I shall attempt to discuss it briefly and pointedly.

Hearken to this startling fact: During a four-year period, a scenario reader—the person whose business it is to read and pass on all submitted manuscripts—at one of the largest producing studios, read and recorded exactly eleven thousand, five hundred and sixty-nine manuscripts, emanating from aspiring writers all over the globe. Out of this voluminous mass of material, the reader found not more than half a score of manuscripts which would conform to the needs and requirements of the company which she represented. Only half a score out of over eleven thousand!

Here is a possible answer to such a situation. Scenario writing is an art—a difficult, intricate study. Even the eminent authors, already successful as novelists and playwrights, have found it necessary upon turning their efforts to screen writing, to spend months studying screen and photoplay technique before they can successfully write directly for the screen. It seems that the public in general have a very vague idea of the amount of study and practice involved before one can become proficient as a writer of successful film scenarios. By way of illustration, one gentleman wrote a letter to the reader above referred to, asking her to please send him "the full particulars of photoplay writing." He went on to say, further, that he had never written, but was desirous of doing so and would like to get an idea of how best to go about it. Others

have been granted interviews by that same studio reader, and have asked for positions on the scenario staff. Upon being asked their qualifications, not a few of them replied, in substance: "No; I have never written, but my friends tell me I should." In what light would the electrical profession regard a man who should write to some big electrical concern and say: "I should like the full particulars of the electrical profession. I know nothing of electricity, but am desirous of becoming an electrician, and should like to get an idea of how best to go about it"? Or, what would the fashion world say of the woman who should go to the establishment of an exclusive modiste and ask for a position of designer, saying, "I know nothing about designing and have never created a new fashion, but my friends tell me I should be a designer"?

It will be well for all who contemplate success as scenario writers, to take note of these comparisons and realize that to become proficient as scenario writers is just as difficult and involves just as much study and concentration as to learn the electrical profession or the modiste's art, or the legal vocation.

One prominent scenario writer, who won success via the short story route, advises all prospective scenarists to first learn to write short magazine stories and succeed in getting one or more published. He declares that he wrote two or three screen plots, couldn't sell them, re-wrote them as magazine stories, sold them to *The Saturday Evening Post* and then turned around and disposed of them for scenario material to the same studio which had formerly rejected them. He subsequently was given a position on the scenario staff at that studio.

In any event, the prospective writer must realize that scenario writing requires study and work and does not consist merely in sitting down for an hour or so, dashing off an idea and sending it in to a studio with the expectation of realizing a sale.

Another prominent scenario writer, with years of successful experience in one of the largest studios, sums up the matter this way: "Writers are composed of three classes—'writers,' 'would-be writers' and 'can-be writers.' 'Writers' are the class

who have taken writing seriously, made it their life work, and generally, in modern days, make a living out of it. .

"The second class, or 'would-be writers,'" says she, "may be found in any walk of life, but is generally composed of the feminine sex. Every night when John comes home, she will have 'plots' and 'ideas' prepared and will talk these to the dear man until the meat is cold and the gravy like a frozen lake in the pan. When she darns John's socks, she visualizes herself as the 'poor working-girl,' and eventually drops the work to write down these ambitious plots. She does not realize that all this is only a reflex of what she has seen upon some past screen—a glamour, a fascination, a mesmeric obsession which has come over her and is driving her, body and soul, into a state of mental confusion and false ambition.

"'But, how do you know I can't write?' she asks. 'Why didn't she write before she heard of the screen?' might be a question to ask her. 'I didn't think of it then.' 'And yet, there were books, the stage—' you remind her. 'Oh, but they're too complex, too difficult to write for! The screen is awfully easy! Just a lot of exciting action, a love-story, a happy ending and there you are.' That, in a nutshell, is the philosophy of the 'would-be.'

"Now for the 'can-be' species. He is kin to the 'writer' in instinct. He knows that because a certain tragedy happened in his home-town and which in that small community caused a great deal of excitement, that this situation is not necessarily dramatic. He does not sit down and write out the tragedy just as it took place and send it to the nearest picture editor. He realizes that while the tragedy may be sensational, it is not necessarily dramatic; so he sets to work painstakingly to evolve this situation and construct it along dramatic lines. For, in the green forest, a builder may visualize a mansion, but, surely, to a casual onlooker, a tree is a tree, although with careful manipulation it may be turned into a house. 'Can-be' knows that writing for the screen is like stringing graduated pearls. They must be arranged according to their sizes and one misplaced pearl will mar the symmetrical beauty of the whole. He knows, too, that the string which holds the pearls may be likened to the theme, the vital, inner force which holds

the whole creation together. If it is a frail string it will break and the pearls will scatter."

This writer presents the case very clearly. Her "would-be" represents the great majority of amateur writers, with whom scenario writing is a temporary obsession. Her symbol, "Can-be" represents the few who reach the goal of success—with whom scenario writing is a prize ambition, an ambition to be strived for.

There seems a marked tendency among amateur writers—especially those of age and worldly experience, to write about events in their own lives. These people overlook the fact that what is most interesting to them because it has some special significance in their own past lives is perhaps least interesting to the general public, and in such stories they generally leave out entirely the most interesting parts—the parts common to everybody, the parts relating to children, education, romance, marriage. Audiences are not attracted by a picture story unless they unconsciously place themselves in the roles of the characters who enact the story, feeling their impulses and emotions. Therefore, those impulses and emotions must be familiar to them.

One of the most important of all requirements in writing a scenario, is to choose that type of story that can be told by what the characters in it do and not by what they say. It is the case where actions must speak louder than words. Therein lies the vast difference between playwriting and scenario writing. The story must also be highly interesting; it must be unusual without being impossible, it must be "different" without being improbable.

Many submitted scenarios depend too much on their villain characters. We should realize that there are good things and noble deeds that can be expressed via the medium of the screen as well as the evil and depraved side of existence. Unless a writer can extract the villain from his story and still have some semblance of a story left, his story is weak.

One thing most sadly needed now in scenario plots is what is known as a new "opposition" in the love theme. By this is meant the condition or circumstance which tends to keep the lovers apart and thus increase the romantic interest. The old

time-worn oppositions, such as the disapproval of stern parents, etc., are of little avail today. Nowadays, boys and girls marry in the face of parental opposition without taking it seriously as was the case a few decades ago. The ambitious writer should try and discover original and genuine and at the same time logical reasons or sets of circumstances which can convincingly interrupt the progress of lovers to the altar.

Having deviated at some length on the subject of amateur scenario writing, I shall now take up the fifth and final proposition outlined at the beginning of the chapter—the development of the scenario from the original, what the scenario consists of and its importance to further production work.

After the selection or writing of the original photoplay, comes its preparation for the director. Therein is involved the art of scenario or continuity writing. A motion picture must present ideas by action and expression, with the use of as few printed subtitles as possible. Therefore, the description or dialogue of the printed story or the dialogue of the play must be conveyed by other means. The scenic and character description of the novel is all absorbed in the settings, backgrounds actually filmed, lightings and effects, wardrobe and choice of types to play the roles. The scenario, therefore, must present the actual meat of the story, the vital ideas, situations and the theme of the story, through the actions and expressions of the players, who grasp the idea and then register it for the camera. The scenario “hits the high spots” as it were, showing only such scenes as are necessary and implying all intervening action by the starting and finishing action of the scenes in question or by the use of fade-outs, fade-ins or subtitles.

For instance, if it is made clear that a man is going out of a house and downtown for a certain purpose, if his journey is only incidental, it is not necessary to show the man leaving the house, walking along the street, arriving at his destination downtown, securing what he went after, getting in his machine or catching his car back and arriving back at the house. It is only necessary to show his departure from the house, explaining in some way his motive, and after a few intervening cut-backs, to show his return entrance.

In this scenario, all the factions of the story must be kept

before the attention of the audience by the use of what is called the "cut-back." For instance, after showing one sequence with one faction, the scene changes to another faction and advances it a bit further in the story.

The scenario is the backbone of the picture. It is a visualized record of what is to happen in each scene, set down in words and explained. A scenario for a feature production may vary in length all the way from two hundred and fifty to four or five hundred scenes. In this scenario, the motives, purposes and acts of the characters, explained in the novel by dialogue or narrative, and in the play by dialogue or soliloquy, must be expressed, so far as possible, by action and expression. Thus, the importance of the scenario, which is the connecting link between the original and the picture, may be realized.

After the scenario is completed by one of the scenario writers, or in some cases, by the author of the original, in case he is numbered among those at the studio, many copies of this script are made and one of these copies given to the director, one to the star or principals, the various other studio departments and the property man. The director or assistant makes out what is known as a "scene plot," in which the scenes are grouped by number, each group being a list of the scenes in any one setting or at any one location. The scenario is studied by every department and it is upon this that the department bases the work it is to do in connection with the picture, and obtains definite ideas as to what is required of it.

In all the larger motion picture plants, there is a regular department devoted to the story and scenario, and this is generally known as the "scenario department." The personnel of this department, in a large studio, includes several scenario writers, perhaps two or three editors or supervising directors, the scenario reader, mentioned above, several title writers and a host of clerical assistants, stenographers, film cutters, etc.



CHAPTER II

CONSTRUCTION OF SETTINGS



THE settings for a motion picture are the stage upon which it is enacted.

Beautiful or appropriate sets add materially to the attractiveness of a picture, because they are the backgrounds of the story. They give the picture a richness of tone and pictorial quality and prepare the mind of the spectator for the action that transpires therein.

There are two general classes of photoplay settings—interiors and exteriors. The interiors are those constructed on the studio stages and are just what the word implies. The exteriors, such as streets and fronts of buildings, homes, etc., are sometimes built at the studio and sometimes erected at some spot which is made suitable by reason of natural geographical conditions. For other exteriors, buildings, homes, gardens, public streets, natural scenery and other permanent locales are used. These are searched out and permission, if necessary, obtained to photograph them by the location director, whose work will be discussed in detail in a later chapter.

A few years ago, in the earlier days of motion pictures, the sets used in photoplays were principally exteriors and when it was necessary to construct interiors, they were very crude and cheap, being made of canvas or other flimsy material and depending largely upon the scene painter's art for any semblance of the real. But today, it is necessary to construct sets which are made of the same materials as are used in genuine architectural construction and are so substantially built that they add, instead of detract, from the artistic value of the film production. This phase of production has had to advance to

keep pace with other phases, until now it has reached a high degree of perfection.

This of course necessitates an efficiently organized department, devoted especially to this branch of the work of making photoplays and generally known in the studio as the art department. In the architectural division of this department which resembles a large draughtsmen's room, the ideas for the settings are originated, sketched as drawings and then laid out in blue prints, later to be executed by subsidiary branches, such as the carpenter shop, the plaster shop, the mechanical shop and property makers and the scenic artists and interior decorators.

The art department is generally under the supervision of some expert architect and interior decorator who has first been schooled in commercial architecture and has mastered the complex art of studio and setting architecture. His staff, in large studios, consists of six or seven skilled draughtsmen, such a staff being capable of designing the sets for about ten pictures under production simultaneously, the average number of settings per picture ranging from fifteen to twenty—exclusive of natural locales. In some, of course, this number is larger, in others, less.

The work of the art department begins immediately after the script is finished and often before, after consultations between the art director and the director who is to film the production. A copy of the finished scenario is delivered to the art department and the art director and his staff study it thoroughly, ascertain just what sets will be required, the nature of their construction, keeping in mind the camera technique, the action of the characters, the period of the architecture and supposed locale of the setting and certain features made requisite by technical points of the story. They even go so far as to take into consideration the complexion and the color of the hair of the principal players, when planning their decorative schemes. If the star is a brunette, a better contrast is obtained if the color scheme is light, and vice versa.

The art department is rendered valuable aid by the research department, which furnishes it with all available information

about the structures in question, the character or period of architecture, the style of furnishings, etc. This latter branch will be treated in more detail elsewhere in this book.

Besides conceiving and executing original designs and plans, the art staff also have to be first rate copyists. In many cases, the picture calls for a literal reproduction or replica of some interior or exterior set or structure. The department takes a photograph of the original and draws up plans for the replica, keeping the copy in exact proportion to the original. Considering the perspective of a photograph, this is often a difficult matter. An instance of this was a studio setting which was an exact duplicate of the palatial lobby of the Hotel St. Francis of San Francisco. It was necessary to build this because of the inconvenience and impracticability of taking lights and paraphernalia to the hotel itself and also because it would have been necessary to practically charter the lobby for several days. A few scenes were actually taken in the big lobby itself and to get further shots to match up with these, it was necessary to construct the replica within the studio.

After the blue prints are made, a set of them is given to each subsidiary department which is to aid in the construction and decoration of the set. These include the carpenter shop, the property makers, the plaster department, the scenic department and the property department. Until the setting is finally completed and turned over to the director for use, it is under the supervision of the art department.

This important unit of the film organization is called upon to design and construct sets of every known style and character of architecture, including many period structures. Each man thus employed has made a thorough study of period architecture and also of character architecture. By character architecture is meant that which belongs to no certain period in history, but which is dependent upon other circumstances. In this class comes the architecture of some countries which has remained much the same throughout the ages and is much the same today as it was hundreds of years ago. Japanese, Turkish, Chinese and East Indian architecture come within this latter class. In other countries, such as France, England, America, Italy,

Spain, etc., the architecture has changed in style and these styles are identified by certain historical data or events.

The art director and his staff never know what part of the world or what period in its history they are going to be called upon to identify by settings. Often, they will be found planning out settings which typify the architecture of four or five different countries or periods, all at one time. For this reason, this department must be very versatile and elastic, as it were.

Another important and interesting feature of the work of the art department is the speed which must accompany the accuracy of its work. In motion pictures, speed is essential, otherwise, production will be held up. If one cog in the machinery is slow and does not work in harmony with the others, the entire machine is crippled and must stop until everything is ready to move in unison again. When the director's script is finally finished and turned over to him, he is ready to begin photographing as soon as his cast and settings are ready. Thus, the art department must work rapidly. Where the ordinary architect will take weeks to work out a design, the art department of the studio must evolve the plans and begin their execution in a matter of days or hours. This is, of course, made more possible by the co-operation and aid rendered by the remainder of the organization units.

It will also be noted that the modern commercial artist has only to work on plans for new structures, whereas the studio art department must evolve plans for buildings or construction work, which in many instances must look very old or antiquated. Work of this kind is further carried out by the scenic artists, which will also be the subject of another chapter.

Some sets are designed, built and turned over to the director in a few hours from the time that the art department receives its first instructions, while in the preparation of the more elaborate ones, the time will run into days. In no case, however, has it required over two or three weeks for the draughtsmen to finish even a most-palatial set or a complicated structure such as a small village or a city street.

Let us consider further the substantiality of the sets built for the finer film productions of today. The sets, especially

interiors, are generally built of the most substantial and durable materials. All materials used in genuine construction are used in the better studios, many of which maintain their own lumber yards and finishing mills. Very little faking is done today in interiors. I dare say that if some of the sets built right within a large studio within a single year, were moved out on a vacant lot, equipped with roofs and outside walls, they would be just as substantial as the corresponding rooms or groups of rooms in any average modern house and in many cases, much more artistic and more beautifully finished. One particular set that I have in mind was a studio-built California Spanish home, with beautiful garden and exterior and four spacious interior rooms. This setting, if moved on to a lot and finished in the manner described would last for a good many years.

For many of the most elaborate structures, or sets, requiring several structures such as villages and town streets, in order that the correctness of design and construction may be assured, and that the director may gain a definite idea of just how the completed setting will appear, a complete miniature model of the set is built in the art director's office after the blue prints and sketches have been prepared. After seeing this model, the director and art department can confer thereon and if they so desire, can make changes in the plans before the set is finally built.

No matter what the nature of the setting, or how large or complicated a structure or landscape it is called upon to prepare, the art department must not fail. Absolute efficiency in this branch of the work is necessary and the word "can't" must not be in the vocabulary of the art director or his assistants.

Two instances of seemingly impossible achievements will well illustrate the above discussion. In the early days of the Lasky studio, Cecil B. deMille was producing a picture starring Mary Pickford, entitled "The Little American." The story involved scenes showing the sinking of the ill-fated Lusitania. The problem was put up to the art department. It was a big, perplexing problem, but they got busy and at once began construction upon a mammoth concrete tank, some fourteen feet

deep. This tank since proved a most valuable addition to the studio facilities and has been used innumerable times since for water scenes of every description. The tank was finished and then a perfect replica of a section of the *Lusitania* was built on steel rockers which rested on the floor of the tank. The latter was then filled with water. Ten tons of pig iron were placed in one side of the ship structure so that when released it would list to one side and turn over, sinking under the surface of the water. Hoisting engines were set in place and by means of cables the ship was held upright on the rockers, and at the proper time the engines were set in motion, the cables slowly unwound and the heavy pig iron weighted the ship down on its side until it sank. All this was prepared at an enormous expense but it was highly successful and with hundreds of people registering terror and panic as the ship listed on its side, the scene was striking and realistic. Controlled by the cables, the ship would be rocked and finally sunk in exactly the same manner as the sinking of the *Lusitania* actually occurred.

Another difficult problem for a studio art department, by way of example, was the construction of a complete lumber camp scene with pine trees, cabins, and a river bank with the river flowing by, on the open studio stage. The location director had hunted in vain for an appropriate natural setting as all desirable lumber camp locations were under water at that particular time of the year when floods were at their height. The order came to the art department to build a lumber camp on the open stage. The camp was built complete and no lumber jack himself, witnessing the scene on the screen, could have doubted but that it was a real, natural location.

The cost of these settings is an interesting item. The California home set referred to elsewhere in this chapter, cost in the neighborhood of five thousand dollars, for labor, materials and landscape and scenic decoration—all complete ready for the director. I have in mind a very unusual set, constructed entirely of plate glass, for a Cinderella vision scene, in a certain picture. This elaborate plate glass structure involved an expenditure of forty-two thousand dollars but it was a monument to the architect's art as practiced in motion

pictures. Another difficult structure built for use in a picture involving scenes aboard a yacht, cost approximately ten thousand dollars. On top of the structure were seven deck cabin set interiors. The whole was rocked with winches on a double set of rockers and when the scenes were filmed the motion was exactly the same as on a floating ship.

To illustrate the wide variety of sets which an art department is called upon to plan and construct, the following examples are cited:

A completely equipped locomotive cab interior, with fire box effects and so arranged that snow-storm effects were discernible through the cab window. The locomotive was on spring rockers so that action would be registered as if it was in motion. This was for filming dramatic close-up scenes within the locomotive cab, these scenes matching up with long shots taken with a real locomotive.

A setting representing a section of a tunnel bore underneath a river—the subsequent seeping in of the water and the final cave-in of the side of the tunnel and gushing in of tons of water.

A complete oil town with a working oil gusher.

A full rigged sailing ship built and set up on an exterior studio site.

A north pole scene with Esquimo huts and icy atmosphere.

These are only an illustrative smattering. Studio art departments, since the inception of motion pictures, have reproduced nearly every style of architecture and construction under the sun and representative of all periods of time.

In the larger studios, the carpenters, plumbers, plasterers, property makers and other artisans whose work comes under the supervision of the art department, generally number about two hundred men.



CHAPTER III

SCENIC ART AND DECORATION



FTER the plans have been drawn and the settings constructed, comes the important work of the studio scenic artists. It is the task of these artists and decorators, to put the finishing touches upon these settings, both interiors and exteriors, to make old effects out of new materials, to make the imitation to so nearly resemble the real that under the eye of the camera the illusion is perfect, and when necessary, to successfully duplicate any original effect or decoration. In short, they must be perfect copyists, skilled artists and decorators and camouflage experts.

A close-up comparison of the crude, two-walled, water-color painted setting of a few years ago with the handsome skillfully decorated, oil-painted, tinted, plastered and artistically perfect setting of today, is most interesting and serves to show the rapid strides which have been made in the scenic art within the studio.

The first studio scenic artists were back-stage theatrical scene painters. Their work in the studio was much the same as their stage work. The head scenic artist in one of the larger studios of today, reminiscing about his early studio work, said:

"When I first came to work at the studio several years ago, they were building the majority of the settings by putting up two canvas flats for the two walls. A door was generally built in, but these doors, like those in an old-time stage setting, were simply cut in the canvas, and when they were opened or closed, the entire wall of the set would shake and quiver. This was often noticeable on the screen, as many will recall who remember the earlier film productions.

"Many of the properties or furnishings were often painted right on the walls. For instance, I often went into a set which was nothing more than the two flats just described. We would then proceed to paint the flats, paint in the windows and drapes, the baseboards, the door sashes and a few pictures on the wall. In kitchen sets, I remember having painted in the stove and cupboard, and the kitchen window with a view of the backyard as supposedly seen through the window. This work was all done with black and white and different intervening shades of water colors."

Nowadays, oils are used almost exclusively in interior decoration and the decorator's art, instead of being confined to the rough work of drawing in furniture and investiture, is applied to the many details of decoration as in genuine homes and structures, and the securing of imitation effects which will photograph so nearly like what they are supposed to represent that on the screen they present the perfect illusion. This latter knowledge must all be gained through practical experience, as it is comparatively a new art and involves an understanding of the photographic values of color.

A few years ago, a fireplace and mantel would most likely have been painted on the wall of the setting, whereas now, the fireplace and mantel are actually built in with materials, which when camouflaged by the artist, resemble stone, glazed brick, marble or whatever is required.

Today, the scenic decorator is an artist and combines all the knowledge and experience of the high salaried interior decorator and the most expert camouflage artist. His job is more difficult in that he must gain effects in a few hours or at most a few days, which the commercial decorator requires weeks and even months in which to accomplish.

For example, the head scenic artist in a certain large studio one day received the startling intelligence that a replica of the lobby of the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, referred to previously in this book, was being built on the studio stage and that he and his decorators were to begin their work at once and must finish in one day as the director was waiting for the set. Can anyone imagine decorating a set so that it should be an exact copy of a portion of the palatial St. Francis lobby, in

one day's time? But the scenic department turned the trick. One of the artists, with advance notice, painted in several days' time, a beautiful large oil painting, a copy of one which hangs on the wall of the hotel lobby.

Such speed is only possible because the chief artist and his assistants have their subject well in hand. They have made a thorough study of all angles of the art of decoration. This is more striking when it is taken into consideration that studio decoration is even more complex and involved than ordinary interior decoration, because the camera and the photographic values of colors must be borne in mind.

These artists must know that if they can't secure a certain shade of brown paint or tint which appears in the original, that they can mix up a certain combination of green that will register, on the film, exactly the same shade as the brown would have registered, when photographed. The photographic values of colors constitutes one of the most important phases of the work with which a scenic artist in motion pictures must be familiar.

Light yellow, light blue, pink, lavender and other light colors are known as "cool" colors and photograph very light or white. Yellow, red, dark blue, orange, dark green and similar colors, are called "warm" colors and register dark on the screen. The cool colors reflect light and therefore photograph light or white, while the warm colors absorb light and photograph with varying degrees of darkness. Often, when two colors, which to the eye are light and dark, respectively, are seen under the eye of the camera, the one which was light will be dark and the one which was dark will screen lighter than the one which to the eye appeared the lighter of the two. An example of this was recorded in a certain picture in which the door facings, fireplace and other woodwork of a large setting were painted a medium light yellow and the wall paper was a shade of grey. Photographically, the yellow was darker than the grey.

There have been instances where what to the eye were very beautiful sets, have been ruined for the screen by color combinations which, photographically, jump and clash or seem to run together. Here is an example. A wall might be

finished in a shade of green and the woodwork or trimmings be colored with brown. If this brown were of a certain tone, it would photograph exactly the same or just a shade different from the green, producing a screen effect which would be very disagreeable, but which to the eye might seem perfectly harmonious.

From the foregoing examples, the great importance of a thorough knowledge of these photographic values, by the scenic artists, can be readily realized.

Hilation is an evil that must be avoided. Hilation is the reflection of light by a glossy surface which causes a light blur to the camera with the result that in that particular spot where the hilation occurs, all photographic detail is lost. Often a painting on the wall, if photographed from a certain angle, will present such a hilation that the detail of the picture cannot be observed. Such hilation is avoided by "toning down" or dulling the surface in question.

The responsibility of the work of decoration and the details of design, are left entirely to the scenic artists. The director simply explains what kind of a set he is planning upon and what effects he desires. The artists then work out the decorative scheme. In one instance, the director instructed the artists that in one of his sets, representing a room in a home built on the old colonial style of architecture, he wished the walls to be finished with an imitation of the old-fashioned hand-painted wall paper. The scenic department, cooperating with the research department, obtained a photograph or illustration of this old style wall paper, and after the walls were papered one of the artists proceeded to work out a similar hand-painted decorative scheme.

In decorating a replica of some original interior or exterior, the artist has only a still photograph or a crude reproduction clipped from a magazine or newspaper, as his guide.

The scenic artist's knowledge of the decorative art must include all periods in history and all parts and nations of the world. In a few short months, one scenic department was called upon to reproduce a wide variety of settings, including the interior and exterior of St. Mary's Church of London, the interior of the hotel at Monte Carlo, an entire street in Shang-

hai, China, a New York tenement street, a San Francisco dock scene and numerous modern settings with a decorative scheme patterned after various periods of American, French and English interiors and exteriors.

The average amount of materials consumed by a scenic department in the modern large studio, represents an outlay of approximately one hundred thousand dollars annually.

The studio decorator is a master of the art of camouflage. Some of the commonest problems presented to such a department are included in the following examples: The camouflaging of compo board squares and the proper laying of them so that when photographed they resemble a tile or stone floor; the painting of surfaces so that the photographic result cannot be distinguished from genuine marble; the tinting and decorating of plaster so that it photographs like bronze, gold or other metals, etc. The scenic artist can, with a few well-placed strokes of his brush, dipped in the proper kind of paint, make a new brick wall look like the side of a dingy tenement house. He can give to a new redwood paneled wall the effect of an oak panel, hundreds of years old, by a process of scraping and tinting.

The artist's work is not confined only to large settings. He is frequently called upon to camouflage some prop or piece of furniture or bric-a-brac so that it presents the appearance of age or decay. In a Russian setting in a certain picture, all the furniture was made up in the studio shops and copied exactly from the original pieces as shown in the photograph which served as a guide for the construction and decoration of the set. It was impossible to secure such furniture at any of the antique stores. After the pieces were built, the decorator got busy and put the magic touch of age upon them. One piece was a cabinet which stood about four feet above the floor. This had been made of redwood, but when the camoufleur finished his work, it resembled the finest oak. It had also been carved with a most intricate design. All of this tedious carving work was executed in a few hours by one of the men on the scenic art staff.

Many famous artists are now included in the personnel of the various studio decorative staffs. For example, at one

studio, there is Hans Ledeboer, a Hollander, who painted Holland scenes for the Onondago Hotel in Syracuse and later did the mural decorations for the Rathskeller grill besides executing the decorative scheme for one of the city's largest theatres. In 1915, he decorated the Holland pavilion at the San Francisco exposition and for that work was awarded a gold medal.



CHAPTER IV

THE PLASTER SHOP

THE plaster shop is a studio institution—the existence of which is not generally realized by the screen public—which is closely related to both branches of production activity discussed in the two foregoing chapters—set construction and scenic decoration.

It is, however, an independent unit or studio branch and is unique enough to be inspected separately.

It is difficult to find a title which fully covers the activities of this interesting branch, because, therein, the highest sculptural art combines with the lowly business of brickmaking.

This shop designs, models and turns out all kinds of sculpture and ornamental bric-a-brac from a statue of General Lee to a simple wall plaque, according to the requirements of the pictures under production. A trip about the large room housing the shop is like a combined excursion to a fine gallery of sculpture and the studios of the artists who created the pieces. Here is a life-sized figure of the Madonna, over there is a bust of Shakespeare, yonder of a figure of a beautiful girl, symbolical of some mythical character or expressive of some inspired idea.

In another corner of the particular shop which provided the material for this chapter—a shop in one of the largest Hollywood studios, were two colossal Nagos, or Siamese monsters with the bodies of dogs, and the heads of humans, which I was informed had been modeled and cast within two or three days, with a photograph as the only guide of the artists. They were seven feet in height and were for use in an immense outdoor Siamese setting for a motion picture then under production.

We turn to another section of the shop and see several men engaged in making bricks. Now, the brick used in the construction of motion picture exteriors are not the regulation brick. Those would be too unwieldy and would require too much time to be laid, to be practicable for motion picture construction. These brick are made in sheets of thirty-five each, of a mixture of plaster and fiber. The sheets are a quarter of an inch thick. The mixed plaster and fiber is simply poured into moulds and allowed to set, forming a sheet of brick. When these sheets are nailed up on beams and the sheets fitted carefully edge to edge, and are painted with red paint or buff color, as the case may be, the most experienced mason will judge the result, from a few feet distant, to be a genuine brick wall. One man in the plaster shop can make ten hundred and fifty of these imitation brick in one day. Thousands of these brick are used at this particular studio in the construction of street settings lined with brick buildings and for other sets supposedly made with brick.

There were seven men working in this plaster shop and everyone was an artist. Each could model in clay, make glue moulds and manufacture imitation marble, but all turned a hand to making brick when not engaged on some artistic piece of sculpture or bric-a-brac.

The odd pieces of decoration, the unusual bits of statuary, queer ornamental decorations, frescoes and mouldings and other ornamental plaster or marble work such as fireplaces, all of which are frequently seen on the screen today, are all examples of the work of such a shop.

The process of making the casts is as follows:

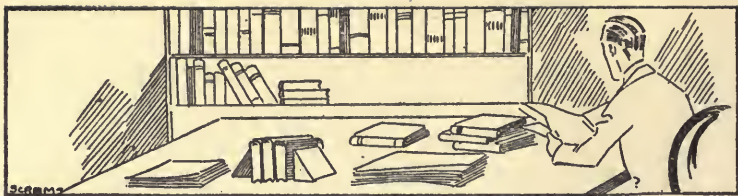
One of the artists first makes a clay model and allows it to harden. The clay model is then covered with grease and covered with a coating of plaster of Paris or glue. This dries and sets and is taken off in sections and then put back together, forming the mould. Into this mould is poured plaster of Paris paste, which sets. The mould is removed and the completed cast remains.

The artists in the plaster shop are continually making samples of all manner of designs of plaster work and these are numbered and put on shelves for selection. All a director or

scenarist has to do is visit the shop and make a choice. Many times, unusual pieces are required and then special models are made. Models are also made of papier-mache.

The process for making imitation marble is most interesting. Keene cement is used and before it sets, silk threads dyed in various colors are drawn through it. This leaves the characteristic marble texture. When a piece of this imitation marble is broken the colors can be seen through the entire thickness. The marble expert in this shop, who learned his art in Italy, also has discovered a way to make imitation alabaster. He mixes a hot preparation of marble dust and alum which he pours into a special glue mold. The finished product looks so much like pure alabaster that even experts are fooled and it is many times cheaper than the real alabaster.

Tons and tons of gypsum and bales and bales of fiber are consumed every month in this large plaster shop to provide plaster ornamentation of various kinds for the productions. Statuary that would cost hundreds of dollars if bought by the piece is moulded every day in this shop of beautiful arts.



CHAPTER V

STUDIO RESEARCH



T was America's beloved statesman and martyr, Abraham Lincoln, who said: "You can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all the people, all the time."

It might be asked what this has to do with motion pictures. For a number of years, film producers unintentionally fooled the people by making pictures which were not entirely truthful—and by that is meant, pictures which made false representations in the way of sets, costumes, architecture, types and other important details. At that time, pictures were produced more cheaply and the producer would build a set to represent some structure in some locality, at some certain period of time, without making thorough investigation into these details—in other words, he did not take particular pains to tell the truth through the medium of his pictures.

As time went on, however, the producer began to realize that one of the most important steps in the production of the modern motion picture, is to make it truthful. The motion picture must not lie. Because of the millions of people all over the world who look upon the picture, its powers as an educational factor are tremendous. It can either misguide the world or it can tell and show facts. Conscientious producers began to realize their duty to the world in an educational way—of the great power that lay in their hands of either promoting world education by presenting facts or injuring world education by presenting misrepresentations or vague, untruthful ideas of facts. Pictures began to have a more widespread circulation—they were shipped abroad, and when a picture, the story of

which was laid in Paris, was shown in that city, it became a joke to the French people because very few elements in that picture were typically French. This applied to any other country, or even to sections in our own country where the story was supposedly laid, but where producers hadn't taken enough pains to make certain that they had faithfully depicted the atmosphere of such a section in their picture.

These various circumstances led up to the establishment within the large studios of what are known as research departments, devoting all their energies to the digging up of necessary data which make the pictures true, faithful revelators of the actual life of the characters which people them and a correct presentation of the locales of the stories.

One can easily imagine the tremendous amount of work and detail that falls upon this unique department as a result of such a policy. With several pictures in production at one time, and research work to be done on each individual picture, the work of the department is colossal. It is the educational center of the studio. One could easily sit down in this department and take a literary tour over the entire surface of the globe. It is a compendium of all human knowledge, past, present and future, a source where any fact might be found.

When a story is first being prepared for production, the scenario writer often goes to the research department and asks for pointers and concrete information on certain technical phases of the story. Often the suggestions of this department open up new ideas to the scenarist. The department furnishes the scenarist with a synopsis covering all the facts of any certain proposition under consideration in the story. When the scenario is finished, a copy of same is handed to the research department and its work on that picture is continued. The scenario is read and a list is made of all the information that will be required during production, concerning architecture, costumes, customs and other phases, in the same manner that the property man makes a list of necessary properties. Some pictures, of course, require more work of this kind than others. For instance, a picture in which many of the scenes are laid in a foreign country, naturally calls for an immense amount of research and investigation by this department as to the man-

ners, customs, costumes, architecture, properties, the people and their characteristics and a wealth of other details concerning the country or locale which the scenes depict and of which they will be representative. Often a picture contains a vision scene which will date back into past history. For instance, in a certain Paramount Picture, there were several elaborate dissolve cutbacks. One of these was based upon a court scene of the Louis XIV period. The architecture, the court manners, the costumes, furnishings and other details all had to be investigated and presented in concrete form by this department.

The research workers cooperate with and aid all the other studio departments, including the wardrobe, property, sculpture or plaster, architectural, scenario and title departments. For instance, when the architects received orders for a certain film production, to build a setting of an opium den and prize-fight ring such as is seen in Shanghai, China, they called upon the research workers for a photograph, if such could be obtained, of such an interior and if the photograph could not be obtained, of a minute and accurate description of such a setting.

The property department might receive orders for furniture or properties of an ancient, mediaeval or modern period to decorate a setting. The property department obtains from the research department photos or descriptions of such furniture or properties and then proceeds with its work.

The plaster department, receives, for another example, instructions to make a duplicate of a famous work of sculptural art, an ancient frieze or a figure of Greek, Roman or Teutonic sculpture. But the plaster department is powerless until the research experts have provided it with a photograph of this certain piece of art, from which it can make a copy.

Research data cannot always be obtained in books and references on hand. The department is often compelled to go outside or seek in unthought of places, the information it requires. That is all left up to the people who are employed for this work. The means is their worry. The director or producer merely says, "I want this or I want that," and it is up to the research department to find it.

It might be of interest to glimpse the various sources from

which the research workers obtain their varied information. The department possesses a comprehensive library and each and every book and periodical therein is rich in facts, photographs and picturesque descriptions of everything of pictorial value. Besides its own library, such a department often resorts to the city's public library. The average research department is allowed twenty library cards. Three books may be taken out upon each of these cards and at no time are any of the cards idle. Thus, the searchers for facts make continual use of sixty books from the city library and these books are continually being changed. Every two weeks, sixty books are inspected and studied and all facts which might possibly be used in film production are indexed and all illustrations which might possibly prove of later value, are photographed and filed.

Thus, it will be observed that a research department does not work only upon demands of present pictures, but is continually looking ahead, laying up information which might be of value at any future time and each day becoming more efficient and more able to meet the demands of production work.

A director or other important production units, may come in at any time in a hurry and want something that very day or within a few moments. The research workers must anticipate their very wishes and as a general rule are usually at work upon the very proposition they seek at the moment they seek it.

The following literary works are among the most valuable of the many volumes on the shelves of the Paramount studio department library.

Encyclopedias of all kinds and editions; "Historic Dress in America," from 1600 to 1870, and "Dame Fashion," from 1786 to 1912; Stoddard's Lectures, Burton Holmes Travels, books on architecture, costumes, customs, transportation, industries, laws, superstitions, creeds and rites and ceremonies and pictorial histories of wars and battles of every country, nation and people on the globe.

Besides the numerous volumes, this particular research unit has a standing subscription for the following monthly magazines: Architectural Record, Architectural Review, Architectural Review (English edition); Asia, Cartoons, Country Life, Everybody's, Good Furniture, Harper's Bazaar,

Harper's Magazine, House Beautiful, House and Garden, Illustrated Review, International Studio, Mentor, Munsey's, National Geographic, People's, Red Book, Sea Power, Theatre, Touchstone, Travel, Vanity Fair and Vogue. Also the following weekly magazines: Billboard, Collier's, Dramatic Mirror, Exhibitor's Herald, Exhibitor's Trade Review, Life L'Illustration (French), London News, London Sphere, Motion Picture News, Motion Picture World, New York Sunday Times, Saturday Evening Post, Variety, Wid's. For the benefit of the wardrobe and designing departments, the following magazines are subscribed for: Bon Ton, Fashionable Dress, Fashion Review, Femina, Harper's Bazar, Millinery Trade Review, Vogue and Women's Wear.

To secure legal blanks, deeds, marriage licenses and forms of every kind, from every state in the United States and from many foreign countries, this department wrote to the many exchanges for the distribution of Paramount Pictures and those exchanges in turn secured the forms from their districts. Thus, in a picture, whether the bride and groom get married in Chicago, Montreal, London or Shanghai and an insert is shown of the marriage license, when the inhabitants of the city in question see the picture, they can notice with surprised admiration that the license is one of their very own and differs not in the least from any number of such licenses filed in their official records. The same rule applies in the case of deeds and other legal forms.

The public no longer find an excuse to say, "Why do they do it?" because they see a California or New York automobile license on an automobile supposedly filmed in the streets of Paris or London. For the research department has avoided all further mistakes in this direction by securing a photograph of the Francis M. Hugo exhibit of automobile licenses from all over the world. This collection is revised every year, and this research department receives every year, a new photograph of the revised collection. From this photographic collection, the property makers can manufacture an exact duplicate of the license needed.

Another valuable asset of the average research department is a large stock of stereopticon views. In these views many

countries, such as Australia, Bulgaria, Ceylon, Central America, Cuba, Egypt, England, France, Ireland, India, Palestine, Philippine Islands, Porto Rico, Roumania, The Balkans, Scotland, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, West Indies and other localities are represented.

Newspapers from all over the world, which prove valuable as properties in foreign settings, hotel lobbies and for inserts, were obtained by one research department by writing to the Chamberlain Patent Medicine Company and requesting copies of all the newspapers in which that firm advertised. If anyone doubts that patent medicine companies realize the value of widespread advertising, he has only to take a look at this collection to have all his doubts removed.

A photographic service, such as Keystone Pictorial News Service or Underwood and Underwood service is also generally on the subscription list of such a department. The photographs obtained through such a service have proven of immense value.

No expense of time or money is spared in getting the facts in any case. For a vision scene in a Cecil deMille production produced some time ago, the producer required some information and if possible, photographs of an ancient Norse Viking. The scene in question was based on an old Norse fable and showed the viking taking leave of his lady fair at the seashore. The manner of leave-taking, the costumes of the characters, the viking's ship and his band of followers all had to be faithfully reproduced. The research department obtained and purchased for over seventy dollars an entire set of volumes of old Norse mythology, entitled, "Anglo Saxon Classics," comprising sixteen volumes. In these books two pictures were found which filled the need perfectly. For two pictures founded on plays laid in Civil War times, the department purchased a set of books entitled, "A Photographic History of the Civil War," in ten volumes, which proved of inestimable value.

Despite the completeness of its books and records, a research department is often compelled to look elsewhere for its information. The law library, educational institutions, chambers of commerce and museums are all searched by the investigators for facts. None are exempt. A picture of an

old historic fort was requested by a certain director. The department, after a long search, finally secured such a picture from the Southwest Museum.

One of the greatest secrets of facilitating and handling the enormous work of a research department, lies in the preservation of all information that has once been ferreted out, so that it can be found again at any time at a moment's notice. Elaborate and perfect systems of filing have been developed. When information of any nature whatsoever is once obtained, the key to this information is entered in the files and thus it is only necessary to search once. Let us illustrate. A picture was produced in which the principal locale of the story was the famous South African diamond mines at Kimberley. The research department of the studio in question worked a week finding all the references to Kimberley and the diamond mining industry, but at the end of that time all of the facts were carded in the files. A short time thereafter, production was begun upon another picture, some of the principal scenes of which were also laid in the diamond mines at Kimberley. But the department had already done its work. The files were complete, and the references were again obtained in a few moments.

These files contain all information that has ever been used in the past and a great deal of data that has never yet been used, but might be useful at any time in current or future productions. They are rich in the keys to all facts that are at all useful in film production. These files are constantly being developed and built up by the addition of references to new material. Every new issue of all of the aforementioned magazines and periodicals is carefully looked over by one of the members of the department and all information of any value contained therein, is indexed in the file. The research workers also scan over all current works of literature of all kinds, including fiction, travel, science, etc. It takes very little consideration to realize even the infinite and endless labor of this one phase of the work. Every time a new book comes off the press—a book which might possibly contain useful material—this book is obtained by the department, thoroughly perused and its contents indexed in the file.

There is a card file and photograph and clipping files. The card file is indexed by countries and under the general head of a certain country come sub-heads referring to architecture, industry, transportation, education, persons (make-up references), vegetation, costumes, customs, history, wars, properties, etc. A description of the matter is entered on the card, together with the period or the date.

The photographic file is invaluable for pictorial references of costumes, architecture and characteristics of the people of various lands. Whenever a good photograph is discovered in any of the books or magazines, a copy of it is made at the studio and the print filed in this collection. The travel books and magazines prove excellent for this purpose.

The system of filing will be explained by the following illustrations: Suppose, in one of the books or magazines on travel, there is an illustrated article on diamond mining in South Africa. This article is indexed under "South Africa" as "Illustrated article—Industry—Diamond Mining." Then each particular illustration therein is also indexed. Often there are illustrations only and these are all carefully indexed. Pictures of buildings or interiors would be entered under the head "architecture," and then under the general head of the country or location. In the same way, a picture of a train would come under "transportation," while a photo of an Arab saying his Mohammedan prayers at high noon would be referred to under the head of "Arabia—Religious Customs." This would also be double indexed as "Costumes." The white cards refer to matter in the department while blue cards refer to matter in the public library or other outside sources.

In the clipping file will be found pictures and articles clipped from magazines or newspapers not generally subscribed for by the department, or of those issues or periodicals subscribed for of which the department has two copies. In the latter case, one is filed and the other clipped.

These files are the key to a wealth of valuable information secured only after years of work and research. That the system in this particular studio is really a remarkable one, has been proven by the fact that students from the library school in Los Angeles come out in a body annually to study the

system as a model for their work when they shall graduate as librarians.

An alphabetical index is also kept of all new fiction and once a month the department purchases all new books of fiction. This is a valuable aid to the scenario department in its inspection and purchase of new stories upon which to found productions.

Some of the unusual requests which have been made of research departments and their manner of procedure in fulfilling these demands for data, might be of interest.

During the production of a certain picture, a question arose regarding the form in which the much-needed quinine was carried across the border to be used in the Confederate hospitals during the Civil War—whether it was obtained in pellets, powders or pills. This seems like a very small point, but the producer was determined that the picture should be truthful, even in this small respect, as the story was to depict the smuggling of some of this quinine by spies.

"The information was needed quickly," said the research department head, "and we didn't have time to make outside investigation. That was one of the hardest problems with which we were ever confronted. We always assume, at the start, that we have the information somewhere. The question is to find it. We looked through everything—histories of the Civil War, medical histories, war hospital records and references to magazines of that period. Finally we found the information in the memoirs of a certain soldier's life, but not until we had waded through no end of reading matter."

In another instance, a director wanted to know the symptoms of snow blindness. This was obtained by consulting a noted specialist. On another occasion, one of the members of a research department had to make a visit down to Los Angeles's Chinatown and after much perseverance succeeded in obtaining the prescription of a mysterious Chinese drug, the formula for which was needed for an insert in a picture. At another time, a department was called upon for pictures of the old Santa Fe trail. These could not be found anywhere in books, but were secured from the files of the Santa Fe Railroad company. When a title artist asked for pictures of the

lavender flower to be used in a color title scheme, the research worker was not daunted when she didn't discover any photographs of this particular species in the flower and nature books on file in the studio library. She made a trip out to the Hollywood hills and gathered some real live lavender and brought it to the studio.

It might seem a rather inappropriate task for a woman to go down and secure a flashlight photograph of the interior of the Los Angeles County jail, but that task fell to the duty of one of the research department heads when the construction architects required a photo of the jail interior. The flashlight was secured, despite the fact that the prisoners swore and protested loudly at the smoke from the flashlight.

Occasionally, the research department is fortunate enough to get information without having to hunt for it. An old timer of the Canadian Northwest once wrote a letter to a studio, wherein he complained in this manner: "Why do the motion picture people always make so many mistakes in portraying an officer of the Northwest Mounted Police? The costumes are often wrong, they handle the guns wrong and they don't ride right. Why do they persist in wearing spurs when they ride in canoes? A Northwest mounted always takes his spurs off when he gets in a canoe."

A letter was soon on its way back from the research department informing the writer that they would be delighted with full particulars about the habits, traits, costumes, idiosyncracies and general behavior of Canadian Northwest mounted men and thanking him for his interest. Soon a reply was forthcoming from the first writer containing much valuable information on the subject. The Canadian need never look for another Northwest mounted character to wear his spurs in a canoe in any picture produced by this company in question, or for similar ridiculous mistakes. The files of the research department have corrected this and many other discrepancies for all time to come.



CHAPTER VI

COSTUMING THE PLAYERS



He can make a bum out of you!

Or, if you have higher aspirations and would rather be a doctor, a lawyer, a king, a rajah, a Turkish prince or a Roman senator, he can do a great deal towards giving you the appearance characteristic of any of those types or any one of a thousand others.

This man with such magic powers is the chief of the character wardrobe, one of the most vital cogs in the machinery of motion picture production. His chief business in life is to make the people look the part which they are to portray upon the screen. Although, as has been said, "looking the part" is important to success in real life, it is absolutely imperative in the reel lives or screen existences of the hundreds of pseudo-characters who inhabit the realms of Shadowland.

When the wise man said that clothes do not make the man, meaning that clothes do not reflect character, he was right and he was wrong—right in that clothes have nothing to do with human character, but wrong in that clothes and costume and manner of dress are most effective and necessary indicators of screen character. But of course, his day was before the day of the screen.

Although clothes or costumes do not always prove character, they do, in most cases, reflect the character of the individual. The costume or manner of dress identifies the type on the screen. When we see a soldier on the street, we know he is a soldier, not by the color of his eyes or the way he walks, but by the uniform he wears—and we know, further, whether he is a soldier of the American, the British, the French, the German or Coxey's army. We know this by the way he is

dressed. And the same applies to Red Cross nurses, cow-punchers, sailors, aviators, policemen, firemen, clergymen, artists, Bohemians and types in almost any walk of life.

The large character wardrobe at the West Coast Paramount studio, the plant which was taken as a model studio in securing much of the material for our journey from Pen to Silversheet, occupies a floor space of six thousand two hundred forty square feet. In such a wardrobe, screen character is made to order, as it were. This wardrobe is known as the "character" wardrobe, as distinguished from the other department on the upper floor of the same building, which is devoted exclusively to the designing of women's fashionable dress and will be described in detail in a subsequent chapter. This character wardrobe provides character dress for men and women players. When a player in a motion picture is informed what is the nature of his role and what type of person he is to portray, whether he be star or extra, he takes up his problems with the wardrobe. The experts therein determine just what sort of wardrobe he is to wear, take his measure, secure the costumes, either out of the studio stock or from any of the large rental sources or if necessary manufacture it themselves in the wardrobe tailoring and dressmaking shops.

The word "character" as used to describe this wardrobe, covers a multitude of varieties of dress. A "character" costume is any kind of apparel or dress that is out of the ordinary run of present-day American apparel, or any costume that belongs to a past period of time or to any other race of people. A business suit of the period of 1890, a convict's stripes, a suit of armor or a Chinese kimono all come within the scope of the term, "character" wardrobe.

To take a tour through such an immense collection of wardrobe is an education in dress. It is the common belief, perhaps, that men's clothes do not undergo nearly so many changes in style and fashion as women's, but a look at some of the specimens hanging on the hooks in this wardrobe would throw a bombshell into such a belief. It is surprising to note the changes in men's clothing which have taken place even within the past ten years.

In the vast stock of character wardrobe, in the studio in

question, there are approximately fifty thousand different costumes and ten thousand varieties, including everything from shoestrings to overcoats. Of some varieties, there are as many as seventy-five outfits, all identical in material and style, such as uniforms, character shirts, trench helmets, Salvation Army costumes, etc.

Looking about the place with a casual glance we see uniforms of all nations and periods, including army, police, firemen's and civilian; cowboy outfits, including all paraphernalia from spurs to hats; Indian costumes, ministers' and clergymen's costumes, robes, etc.; aviator's clothes; waiters' and servants' outfits from every country in the world; English hunting outfits; colonial costumes, character dress and uniforms; all kinds of character shirts; women's house dresses; women's frocks of all kinds, costumes of Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Turkish, Spanish, French and many other nationalities; orphanage uniforms; convict stripes, masque ball costumes; men's and women's fancy dress costumes; nurses' uniforms of all kinds, army and civil; underwear of all kinds, a wide variety of character shoes and boots of various nationalities and periods in history; hats of every kind, men's, women's and children's, from Opera hats to engineers' caps; tights, African "G" strings; men's riding suits, death robes, etc. Of men's and women's character shoes there are fifteen bins, averaging fifty pairs to each bin, or approximately seven hundred and fifty pairs of shoes. Also there are many pairs of expensive modern shoes and boots. There are one hundred and fifty suits of underwear, three hundred and forty Salvation Army outfits and many Civil War uniforms—in short, a representative smattering of nearly every article of apparel ever worn by man from the earliest time down to the present and from head dress to the shoes.

The smaller articles include badges of all kinds, such as firemen's, policemen's, bellboys', chauffeurs' and a large assortment of medals, including genuine French Croix de Guerre and honor medals; auto licenses from all over the country; collars, collar buttons, chevrons, rubber gloves, police, firemen, navy and army buttons from different nations; rubber socks,

army socks, gaudy jewelry of all kinds, beards and wigs and an infinite variety of what-nots.

When one sees a soldier outfitted by this wardrobe, in a picture, he would little suspect that that soldier wears all regulation army attire, even to his undergarments, but an inspection of his wardrobe would reveal that even his socks and underwear, never visible in the picture, perhaps, are the regulation socks and underwear. Accuracy is the watchword, even in the smallest details of a costume. For who knows but what the director will take a scene in which the soldier is wounded, or involving some such circumstances which might reveal some part of his undergarments?

The stock contains almost everything out of the ordinary in the way of clothing and costumes but it is impossible to provide against every possible contingency. Often it is necessary to go outside to rent a supply of special costumes. For one big scene in a certain picture, two hundred fancy dress costumes were rented, at a rental cost of thirteen hundred dollars for one week.

Costumes are continually being made up by the wardrobe seamstresses or purchased from various outside sources. The stock is thus being continually increased as these new acquisitions are added and indexed in the files of the department at the finish of the pictures in which they are used.

One of the most prized possessions of the wardrobe at the studio above referred to, is a sterling silver suit of armor which was made up especially for Geraldine Farrar to wear in her role of "Joan" when Cecil B. deMille filmed the picture, "Joan, the Woman." This beautiful suit was made at a cost of fourteen hundred dollars and is now valued at about two thousand dollars. At the same time this suit was made, fifty other suits of mail were needed for Joan's soldiers. It was impossible to obtain or rent these, so the department contracted with a local cornice works to have them made at a cost of twenty-five dollars each, or twelve hundred fifty dollars for the lot.

This immense stock of the wardrobe is systematically indexed and segregated and the wardrobe employees are familiar with the location of each and every garment or class

of garments. Each costume has a number which corresponds with the number on a card in the numerical file index. Where there are several costumes identically alike as in the case of soldiers' uniforms, all are entered on the same card and bear the same number. On this card is a description of the garment or costume and a record is kept of when each costume was let out and to whom and for what picture, when it is returned and all details of the transaction. Thus every article is so checked in and out of the wardrobe that there is a minimum of loss.

In preparing and securing the costumes for any picture, the wardrobe department of course obtains much valuable data from the research department, which provides either a photograph or an accurate description of the costume which should be provided the players for their respective roles.

In modern pictures, even the costumes for large crowds of extras are always provided by the wardrobe department, because individuals cannot be depended upon to dress themselves with the perfect observance to detail that is now necessary because of the world-wide circulation of motion pictures among critical audiences.

A system is in operation at most studios by virtue of which the costumes are always ready for principals, bits and extras on the days on which they are to be filmed by the director, thus preventing any hold-ups in production from that source. The moment the scenario is finished, the wardrobe staff begin their work to prepare all costumes. The assistant director makes out what is called a "wardrobe plot," which is an outline of each costume that will be required by each player and just when it will be needed. Under the name of each principal player and under important groups, are delineated the various changes of costume to be worn, giving the period and character of the costumes. Each one of these changes is identified by a number. The wardrobe department starts to work right away preparing these costumes. Every day, from the time that photography starts, the assistant director brings in what is known as a "shooting schedule" which sets forth the scenes that are to be filmed on the day following, the set in which they will be filmed, the characters to be called and the particular costumes, identified by the numbers of same as given in the wardrobe

plot, which these characters are to wear. These costumes are then gotten in readiness for the next day's work. Most of the character costumes of the star, if any, are prepared before the picture begins and turned over to the star, who returns them at the finish of the picture. All others, however, must take out their costumes every morning and return them at the close of the day's work.

By way of illustration, a small portion of the wardrobe plot for "Brewster's Millions," a picture produced some time ago, is herewith set forth:

WARDROBE PLOT

Picture: "Brewster's Millions."

Character—Monte Brewster. (Name of star).

1. Baby dress—period 1895 (Brewster is now 25 years of age). Baby cap.
2. Buster Brown suit—period 1898, complete. Straw hat, large.
3. Pajamas and bathrobe; business suit (modern), etc.

The above partial reproduction shows three of the nine changes which the star wore in that picture. All of the garments above entered, except the business suit, were prepared before actual work on the picture began and were made up in the wardrobe. The number before the change identifies the change on the "shooting schedule," issued daily for the next day's work. After naming all the costumes required by the star, the wardrobe plot continues with every other player of any importance in the picture and sets forth all the costumes needed for that player. In making up a large number of costumes for extra people, the department always prepares a few over the required number so that everyone can surely be fitted and there will be no danger of running short.

The moment a garment or suit is finished with by any player, it is immediately sent out to be cleaned or laundered. In this way, everything in the vast stock is kept strictly clean and sanitary.

Illustrating the complicated nature of the work of the wardrobe experts—a picture was produced in which about two hundred costumes were provided for a sequence of scenes in a

single Chinese cafe setting. This was supposedly a Bohemian cafe in Shanghai and costumes had to be furnished for many types of people of various nationalities and various degrees of caste. The types in this particular setting included Chinese, English, Japanese, American, French, Turkish, Hindu and other nationalities. There were rich men, tourists, pleasure seekers, idlers, gamblers and all classes from the most aristocratic on down to the dregs of human society. All these had to be appropriately costumed.

The value of the wardrobe stock is a most interesting phase. This valuation must be expressed in two sets of figures. Its cold, commercial value might be confined to ten or fifteen thousand dollars, in the case of the average large studio, but in another sense, the stock might be said to be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, taking into consideration the scarcity of some of the articles and the time and trouble and expense involved in securing them. For instance, if you spent a thousand dollars in a search for some antique that would be worth, in actual practical figures, about a hundred dollars, you would not think of parting with it for less than eleven hundred. That would represent its value to you. Much of the wardrobe clothing, which, being character stuff, is old, worn or faded, would be assessed at a very low figure by the junk dealer or the second hand merchant. But after taking into consideration the difficulties encountered in securing such stock, its value in motion pictures, its completeness, the extreme scarcity of some of the garments and paraphernalia, we arrive at an entirely different sense of values. Anyone who thinks it would be easy, for instance, to go out and get possession of an old suit of clothes made about the year 1898, is badly mistaken. Such relics are scarce. Value is a variable thing and varies with how badly a thing is wanted or needed. An old suit or pair of pants which might be considered worthless by the person who has worn it years ago, might be very valuable to the wardrobe department inasmuch as the lack of just such a costume and the time consumed in obtaining it, might hold up an expensive company and pile up huge salaries for two or three days.

One of the most cherished possessions of a certain studio wardrobe is an old London cab driver's coat—green with age

and just the thing to set off the character of the old fashioned London cabby. Any individual would perhaps gladly part with it for a dollar and a half, but to the wardrobe it is worth something like a hundred dollars because it took a week's time and some little expense to get it. The cleaners are always cautioned to be particularly careful with it and not to injure it. The value of worn clothing lies in the very fact that they are naturally worn. It might be possible to cut or tear some holes in a pair of pants and put them on a character but they would never look like the marks of genuine age and wear and would impair the realism of the characterization in the picture.

The wardrobe is constantly on the lookout for suitable stock, and in emergencies often goes to honorable extremes to get a certain article. "On one occasion," relates a certain wardrobe chief, "I saw a fellow on the street down town with an old coat on and one which was just the thing we needed for a character in a certain picture. I bought it right off his back for five dollars. Another time I bought a ragged fellow a brand new pair of trousers for an old, ragged pair which he was wearing. He accepted my offer quickly, thinking, perhaps, I must surely be crazy and anxious to close the deal before I came to my senses."

A striking instance of the detail involved in the selection of proper costumes is to be seen in the following example: The scenes of a certain picture were to show a New York policeman bending down over a little boy who was picking a flower from a parking. It was necessary to investigate the exact date at which this particular species of flower bloomed in New York and then to ascertain whether or not by that date the members of the New York police force had changed to their summer uniforms.



CHAPTER VII

FILMLAND'S FASHION SHOPS



ARTISTIC motion pictures call for characteristic settings and investiture, perfect photography, appropriate costumes and beautiful gowns for the feminine star or principals. Hardly a picture is now produced which does not contain some scenes in which such feminine star or principals are shown elaborately and gorgeously gowned. Gowns and women's fashionable dress have become recognized as an attractive feature of any good picture and the situation has now reached the point where milady never attends a motion picture show without taking close observation of the gowns, hats and other fashions worn by the feminine members of the cast. She has come to realize the care exercised in preparing these gowns, their exclusiveness of design and their originality of style.

Thus it is that that studio department which devotes itself to the creation and fabrication of women's fashions has become one of the most important in the entire work of production. Besides being one of the most important, it is one of the most interesting and in the larger film plants, it presents a most convincing proof of the rapid strides which have been made in modern film production. The fashion department, as it may be termed, is much the same as any large dressmaking and designing establishment. It is complete within itself and operates under its own organization, synchronizing its work, of course, with the demands of the directors and players, as in the case of all other studio departments.

The fashion department of our model studio occupies the entire second floor of the large concrete building, the lower

floor of which, as mentioned in the previous chapter, contains the character wardrobe.

One hundred to a hundred and twenty-five girls and women are employed at all times and the gowns worn by all the principals and extras are designed and finished for use.

Illustrative of the capacity of this unique department is the fact that three thousand gowns were designed and finished in the workrooms during one average year, for use in the pictures produced at the one studio. This represents a daily average of about nine new gowns.

Five distinct branches comprise the fashion department. These are the dressmaking room, the stock rooms, the finished wardrobe, the millinery shop and the fancy costume shop. The stock rooms contain the materials to be used in the gowns, hats, etc., the finished wardrobe is a long room filled with hangers, drawers and shelves wherein are stored and hung the finished gowns and hats and other fashion accessories such as bags, shoes, furs, plumes, etc. In the dressmaking room are something like thirty or forty sewing machines operated by expert seamstresses; also a number of designers, cutters and fitters, who carry out the instructions of the chief designer. In the millinery shop are the designers and makers of new styles in hats. Many pictures call for fancy costumes such as for a masque ball scene or period wardrobe. These are designed and made up in the fancy costume department. All of these separate branches are under the direct supervision of the head designer.

As a rule, for almost every feminine principal in nearly every picture produced, several gowns are necessary. This means a continual production of new and original designs as no gown which has ever been worn previously by a principal can be worn by the same principal or any other principal in a later picture. The gowns, after being finished with by the principals in any one picture are remodeled and hung in the finished wardrobe to be assigned to extras in large ballroom and social scenes in later pictures. But even this stock must be disposed of after being used a few times.

One of the most talked-of sales in the history of feminine

fashion was held at the fashion department of a certain studio and some three or four hundred gorgeous creations were sold to the public at ridiculously cheap prices. These had been used to their screen limit and although still in excellent condition, some of them being almost brand-new, they had to be disposed of as they were no longer available for screen use. This was a decided proof of the practicability and genuineness of the gowns as designed today for screen players. They could be worn in real life just as well and were made of the most beautiful and genuine materials.

A further example of the genuineness of these gowns as designed for use before the camera is the fabulous cost of some of the creations of a studio fashion department. A gown worn by Gloria Swanson in a certain picture, which contained thousands of pearls and a large strip of ermine, cost over three thousand dollars. Another seen in the same picture—a negligee of black velvet, was valued at one thousand dollars. Several Chinese costumes worn by another star, represented a valuation of from three hundred to seven hundred dollars each.

All designs by the chief designer are absolutely original. This is the only way to keep in advance of style. It must be remembered that a picture is not released for the screen until about five or six months after its production. Therefore, the styles worn by the feminine players in the picture must be several months ahead, so that by the time the picture is released, no worn-out styles will be seen in the new pictures. The gowns must be absolutely appropriate for the characterization in the picture in question. They must be just as expensive or just as plain as the occasion demands.

The head of the fashion department is usually a designer who has had extensive experience in some exclusive eastern establishment and is prolific in the work of creating and executing original feminine attire.

The best of materials are purchased for this work and the latest novelties and weaves are obtained. The department is in constant touch with import agents and buys small quantities of all the most costly and newest materials. Small quantities are bought because each gown must be exclusive and not more than

one or two gowns must be made up of any new kind of materials, as a greater number would cheapen the new creation.

The chief designer of one large studio makes a trip every few years to New York and Paris, Rome and London for the purpose of looking over new materials and getting new advance fashion ideas. The beneficial results of such a trip are always seen in the gowns which the players wear in succeeding pictures, most of which are of exquisite design and material and which fully justify the expense of the trip. While abroad she secures many accessories, the majority of which will not be on the general market for months to come. On one voyage, a certain designer bought up a supply of black and white monkey fur which was very new and rare at that time and which she secured only after searching London and Paris. This was made up into a gorgeous monkey fur coat which was seen on the screen soon after her return, worn by a feminine star in a motion picture vehicle.

In making a gown, the designer begins with the materials and a dress form. There is one dress form in the shops for every feminine star and principal in the studio and these forms bear the names of the respective persons of which they are identical in figure. The designer drapes the materials about the form until she obtains a new and striking effect, then pins it in place and gives her instructions to her assistants. No pattern is made except in the case of tailored fashions. A pattern serves to spoil the originality of a gown, giving it a stiff and stereotyped appearance. The gown, after being cut and put together, is then fitted to the player for whom it is intended, but so efficient has become the fashion department that any altering is very rarely necessary.

The fashion department of the studio differs principally from any exclusive dressmaking establishment, only in the amount of time consumed in turning out a new creation. Where the average exclusive shop would take a week or more, the designer and her staff will perfect a design and make the gown in a much shorter time, ranging all the way from several hours to two or three days. Speed in this as in other departments is essential. The director must not be delayed by uncom-

pleted gowns and they must be ready on schedule time. At the time this chapter was written, one designer had orders for five new gowns for a well-known star, to be worn in a new picture. The time limit allowed her for the designing and completion of these five new gowns was about two days and she was just preparing to begin her work.

The producers place no limitations on their designers in their choice and use of rich and expensive materials. Thus, the designing and creation of these gowns constitutes one of the most costly items on the studio books. In order to justify this enormous expense, the economic phase of this work is very carefully considered and a policy of the strictest conservation of materials is adhered to.

"We do not waste so much as a button or a scrap of cloth," observes one prominent studio designer. "We secure the best fabrics obtainable and get all the new weaves as soon as they are out, buying staple goods direct from the factories and novelties direct from the importers. At the beginning of each picture, I estimate the probable cost of the gowns which will be required. There is no standard figure which will represent the cost of the gowns for any single picture. It varies, of course, with the number and quality of gowns required. I have made up dresses for a single picture, ranging in cost all the way from fifteen dollars to several thousand dollars a dress. The total cost of gowns in one Gloria Swanson picture was about ten thousand dollars."

Many are under the impression that the stars and principals furnish their own gowns. This is not so in the case of players in the larger modern studios.

There is a tremendous saving in the designing and making of gowns right in the studio. A studio fashion shop can produce gowns for just fifty per cent as much as would have to be paid for similar import gowns were they bought from shops and importers.

The gowns made for all feminine stars and leading women are held from sixty to ninety days after the picture is finished and in many cases until the picture is released, when they are often used for special exploitation purposes. At the opening of a certain picture in which many beautiful gowns were worn

by the feminine star, the most elaborate of those were sent to New York and worn on the stage in a prologue put on by the exhibitor who ran the picture.

No original design is ever used in another picture, but the materials are used over and over again. After it has been held for the customary period of time after the completion of the picture, the gown is taken completely apart and the materials laid away for future use in other gowns. The average fashion department has continually in stock hundreds of gowns which have been worn and then made over so that they are completely new in design. Many of these, as explained before, are worn by extra people in large ballroom and society scenes.

When materials, such as velvets and brocades, become too soiled for use and cannot be effectively cleaned, they are dyed another color and can then be used again. When the materials get to the point when they can no longer be used in the making of new gowns, they are often made up into fancy pillows for use on the settings.

Occasionally the gowns are subjected to hard wear or destructive elements and the materials are rendered useless in making new creations. Then the loss is considerable because of the possibility of using the materials for gowns in only one picture. Many beautiful designs, made up for the girl chorus in a pony show sequence in a certain picture were all badly worn. The girls playing in the chorus all danced and worked in them for about three weeks, many rehearsals of the dancing act being necessary before the scene could be perfected.

The department strives constantly, however, to keep waste or loss of materials down to a minimum and to get all possible use out of every piece of cloth or trimming which is brought into the wardrobe stock. Even such little things as flower trimmings are used again and when they begin to fade are dyed black.

The biggest item on the fashion loss account is that caused by the use of gowns in water scenes—scenes in which the players and gowns are sprinkled or drenched by water. In such a scene the gown is almost invariably ruined and the materials have to be discarded.



CHAPTER VIII

PROPERTIES

WHAT is a motion picture prop?

Upon the definition of this little word hinges the immensity of the task of the property department of any large modern film producing plant, for the work of such a department is to obtain the necessary props or properties used in the settings which form the backgrounds for the picture.

That little word "prop"—which is nothing more nor less than the word "property" shortened in typical American style—is perhaps about as general a term as is to be found in the English language, for anything under the sun that is handled by the players or used before the camera in connection with a motion picture scene, comes within its scope. Neither a circus elephant, a railway coach nor a wedding ring are necessarily props until they are used in a scene in a motion picture, but when so used they immediately come under that classification.

The importance and difficulty of the work of the property department lies in the wide variety of articles that may be so used and the effort required to locate and secure such articles for use in motion picture scenes.

The property man must strike the word "can't" from his vocabulary. He may not know where he is to secure an article for a picture, at the time it is requested, but he must make it a point to know as soon as possible and go and get it. There is perhaps no other vocation in the industry where one is better trained to "deliver the goods," and nothing but the goods wanted.

Here is what the chief of one of the large studio property

departments says regarding their work and their methods in its execution:

"One of the most important tricks in this game," he observes, "is to know in advance where you can find anything under the Sun in short notice, because making motion pictures is just one long series of short notices. My men and I are on the job all the time. We keep our eyes open all day long and sleep with one eye open at night. Props are our creed, our philosophy, our ideal, our main aim in life. The more information we can get in our heads and on our books about props, the happier we are. We take a particular pleasure in uncovering the hiding place of some unusual and unthought-of property. We don't wait until we are called upon to furnish something. We get a line on everything and then when some particular thing is wanted, it often falls within the list. Preparedness is our watchword. No day passes but what our files are supplemented with a new lot of information about where certain properties can be located quickly. We never miss a bet. If we see a prop, anywhere, we get the dope about it.

"One night I chased a Ford taxicab, 1913 model, for twelve blocks and finally caught it at Fifth and Main. I saw that it had an unusual feature and one which we are constantly on the lookout for. Despite its age, it had been kept in perfect condition, was well polished and looked almost like a new issue of an old model. That, to me, was a valuable find, because we often find it necessary to get some property for a picture, the action of which is supposed to have transpired several years ago. For such a story we need props which are in keeping with that period of time, but which often must appear to be new or only slightly worn. I obtained the address where the car could be secured, a description of the car and next day entered it on my index at the studio. It wasn't over two weeks until I was informed that a certain director wanted just such a car for his picture."

As will be understood from the foregoing, there are two property indexes. One is a list of the properties on hand in the prop room, naming, describing and numbering something like sixty-five thousand items, and the other a list of obtainable

props, much larger than the first list, and which contains all necessary information about properties not on hand but which may be secured on short notice, where they may be secured, possible rental costs, etc.

Every article in stock in the property department bears a number which corresponds with the number of that article in the index book. This book gives a complete description of the prop, a record of when it is given out, the number of the picture and the set in which it is used and when it is returned to the stock. The list of obtainable props, not on hand, includes, as might be surmised, a ridiculous variety of entries, ranging from trained monkeys and foreign automobiles to false teeth. This list is necessarily several times larger than the list of articles on hand and is added to and increased daily.

One of the largest props on record and which is entered on this latter list, is a circus. One day, the property man at a large studio received instructions from a director to get him a complete circus. The former located a circus on a tour, the director conformed his schedule to accommodate the time of its arrival in the city, and the circus, upon arriving, was engaged in its entirety for two days.

Despite the property man's efforts to keep always ahead of the game and posted with advance information about what will be needed, there are of course numerous occasions when he is caught unprepared. It would be beyond the limits of human possibility for him to have a line on every conceivable article that comes within the meaning of the little word, "prop," and for which a need might arise during the course of a picture. When he hasn't the article listed, he has to get out and dig for it in a hurry. There is no other alternative. With him rests the final responsibility. He must go and get it and he always works on the assumption that any property can be obtained and that he can find it.

As soon as the script is finished by the scenario department, the property man's work begins. Each separate producing company has a property man who works right with the company staff. This man makes out what is known as a property plot. The chief of the property department and his men, make out another plot and the two are then compared. From

this, a complete, final property plot or list of properties which will be needed for the picture, is evolved. This list then serves as the guide sheet for the department as to what will be needed, and when, and the men begin their work immediately to locate and produce everything on the list.

The property division is also responsible for the furniture and furnishings, draperies and decorations for the setting. Some of the furniture is in stock, but most of it has to be rented, to avoid duplication.

As an example of some of the unusual properties which a department is sometimes called upon to provide, some of the items on the prop list for a Paramount picture starring Wallace Reid, are cited. This was an automobile race story and among other things, eight fast racing cars, each capable of attaining a speed of more than eighty miles per hour, were required. To pilot these eight cars, it was necessary to find experienced racing pilots, to insure a minimum of danger to all concerned. Four of the cars were secured from Mr. Fred Duesenberg of the Duesenberg Motor Company, who was at that time on the coast for a big racing meet. These cars were all regular racing entries. Four famous pilots were engaged to drive them. Then four more pilots were signed, each of whom had his own machine. Another item on the list called for enough machines to completely stock an automobile show room. For this, trucks, touring cars, coupes, roadsters and sedans were rented.

The value of the articles in stock in the property department is of interest. Like the stock in the wardrobe, as described in a previous chapter, the properties might be said to have two values—one computed from a cold, commercial standpoint, the other contingent upon the usefulness of the articles to the studio, and the amount of labor and time that was spent in securing them. One property head recalls having once spent six dollars in automobile hire and about thirty dollars worth of time in locating an old frayed lady's purse, which would be worth about twenty-five cents to the junk dealer. This was needed for a picture and the only thing to do was to find it, at all costs.

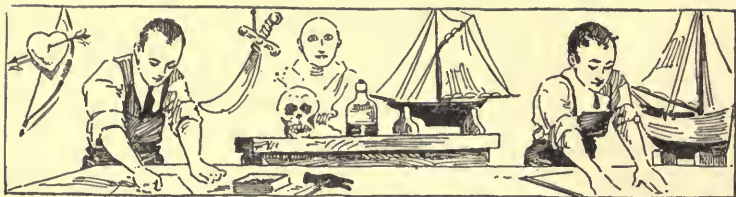
Many of the rented properties are of great value, and one

of the most important responsibilities of a property department is the careful handling of these rentals and returning them to the original source in the same condition in which they were received. In a Paramount picture starring Gloria Swanson, there was one setting representing several interior rooms of an old English ancestral home, for which the property department secured something like twenty-two thousand dollars worth of rented properties. These included two walnut antique chairs of the Louis XVI period, valued at eighteen hundred and fifty dollars, tapestries worth twenty-five hundred dollars, a Buhl clock, two hundred years old, which was secured from a private collection and many famous and costly oil paintings, obtained from some of the wealthiest homes in Southern California. If one of these tapestries or paintings were only slightly damaged in the handling, the property department would have been compelled to purchase it outright. For a single setting in another picture, furnishings and properties valued at twenty-seven thousand dollars, were rented. One piece was a small ivory figure, fourteen inches high, of some famous work of art, valued at eleven hundred and twenty-five dollars.

In this, as in other instances noted, the research department lends valuable aid in outlining the kind of furnishings or properties required, to be in keeping with certain periods or locales. As the art of film production has advanced, audiences have become more discriminating and now demand realism in the smallest details. A few years ago, many fake props and makeshifts were used, but now no effort or expense is spared in finding the genuine. Where they used to furnish up a library set with book backs nailed to a board—only a camouflaged imitation—they now use real books for libraries, drawing from the property stock of something like twenty thousand volumes. And to look through that collection of books is a treat. They contain all kinds of human knowledge from astronomy to practical business training and include every kind of volume from a Montgomery and Ward catalogue to Socrates' philosophy, the family medical adviser or the White House cook book.

The model property room contains many interesting and

unique features. In one corner of the one investigated for this chapter, is a complete compartment where were stored what are known as "hand props." There are to be found all varieties of small and valuable properties ranging from a Chinese violin to a wooden leg. On the second floor is a complete arsenal, containing all kinds of guns, past and present. In another section are the twenty thousand books mentioned above. Looking about elsewhere, we find stored enough labeled liquor bottles of different varieties to make a saloon keeper's collection look sick. Then, there is the large room devoted to the drapery department, where fancy drapes and materials of all kinds are wrought into beautiful hangings and upholstery by skilled experts and hung on the settings. At the shipping room, several trucks are kept busy every day transporting rented props to and from the studio. In an adjoining building is the prop making shop, where skilled mechanics make every conceivable property and effect which the property men are unable to obtain elsewhere. This department is of singular interest and will be discussed in detail in the next succeeding chapter.



CHAPTER IX

PROPERTY MAKING AND EFFECTS



HE Impossible Department."

Rather a strange name, perhaps, for one of the many institutions within a motion picture studio, and yet, a name which fits it perfectly, as will be seen by the reader as he becomes more intimately acquainted with it.

This unique branch of film production activity, where many things are done for the screen which makes the spectator in the theatre exclaim, "How do they do it?" was so christened by Cecil B. deMille, noted producer when escorting Eddie Rickenbacker through the Paramount studio. Upon reaching a large shop which housed this department, the following conversation ensued:

"What kind of a department do you call this?" asked Rickenbacker, his curiosity aroused by many strange models, miniatures, etc., hanging from the ceiling and walls.

"This is what I call the 'impossible department,'" replied Mr. deMille.

"And why such a designation as that?" questioned the famous Ace.

"Because," replied Mr. deMille, "their business is to do the impossible. Whenever we want anything for a picture, any property or effect, and it is impossible to buy it, borrow it or secure it in any way and everybody else says it is impossible to make it, then we come in here and they give us what we want."

Now that you know the nickname of one of the most unique studio branches and how it derived that name, you

are perhaps curious, as was Rickenbacker, to know what kind of a department it is.

This mechanical shop might be more literally described as the property making shop. To say that the wizard mechanic who has managed this shop for the past six years and his staff of men can make anything under the sun or a photographic illusion thereof, is not so much an exaggeration as it may seem. To say the least, their record is clear—they have never known failure during six years of production activity, but have ably met every problem that has confronted them.

The property shop, in this particular instance, is housed in a large corrugated iron building and is equipped with a power driven band saw, jig saw, rip and cut-off saw, a lathe and an infinite variety of tools, patterns and other mechanical equipment.

As the wizard in charge explains, however, his most effective tool in this work is common sense and a knowledge of mechanical principles and how to apply them to almost any problem that might arise. This line of mechanical work is of necessity different from any other line of mechanical art. It cannot be learned in any school of mechanics; it is not confined to any one branch of mechanics, it embraces many.

The property makers practice the great art of delusion. These men make their living doing things which fool the public. Never were there more expert dyed-in-the-wool deceivers. But they do save their production company a tremendous amount of money which would otherwise be expended in construction or rental of the real. They do not, however, rob motion pictures of their realism. Whenever the real can be secured or constructed for a reasonable outlay, it is utilized, but on many occasions, when it is impossible to find or make the real, these mechanical artists and their illusions are necessary.

The chief mechanic and his staff are always accomplishing the seemingly impossible and accomplishing same in the shortest conceivable space of time. Their orders are not simply,

"make so and so or work out such and such an effect." They include a limitation—"and have it for me by Saturday," or some other day of the week as the case may be.

They didn't get excited when a director came in one day and said, "I must have about eight big canoes, sixteen or eighteen feet in length, to hold twelve or fourteen people, each to be used in lake scenes up north. Must have them by next Tuesday." It was then Thursday. This meant about three working days in which to design and build eight unusually large canoes and build them so they would be practical and not endanger the safety of the twelve or fourteen people who were to cruise in each. But the canoes were built and turned out on time. In this instance, the property mechanic and his staff had to be boatbuilders—a very difficult specialty line in mechanics and construction.

It would seem impossible to the layman to work out a large snowstorm effect, with a carpet of snow on the ground, and icicles hanging from the eaves of houses and a blizzard of blinding snow driven through the air by a strong gale, and all this in Southern California, where the thermometer seldom reaches the freezing point, but it was a perfectly feasible undertaking for the mechanical genius who happened to know the tricks of the trade from previous experience. His carpet of snow on the ground was fine salt, which was also heaped up in smooth rifts, in crevices and corners. His icicles were made of plaster of Paris, his strong wind was provided by a large wind machine at one end of the street set—a huge airplane propellor revolved at a high rate of speed by a powerful motor—and his falling snow, blown helter-skelter by the wind, fine flakes of asbestos fed from a box above the machine and directly into the currents of air emanating therefrom. All this was staged in the heat of summer.

It might seem equally impossible to one not versed in such matters, to make a rainstorm on a perfectly dry day in the midst of Southern California's six months' dry season. But when it comes to making rain and confining it to a certain area, Mr. Hatfield, the famous rain maker has nothing on the chief property mechanic. While the former confines his downpour to perhaps a few square miles, the latter cuts

it down to a few square yards—the inside of the camera range. He has made rainstorms for numerous pictures and his mechanism consists simply of a long sprinkler pipe, supported at either end by high tripods. The pipe is closed at one end and to the other end is attached a hose with a strong pressure of water. This device sets a few feet in front of the camera. Beside the camera is the wind machine mentioned above. The falling drops of water, distributed by the sprinkler pipe equally over the linear section before the camera, are blown over the entire area by the wind currents and in this area the characters enact their scenes.

The mechanical department's problems often involve unusually intricate phases because of the peculiarities of photographic values. When first asked to prepare a fire scene for a director, this mechanic-artist discovered that the natural flames would hardly register photographically. He then added chemistry to his store of mechanical knowledge and in a short time concocted a sort of acid, which when put on structure to be burned, caused the flames to be white or very light in color, with good actinic value. These flames photographed excellently.

Again, during the filming of another picture, he was asked to prepare an effect which almost anyone would at first concede impossible—to make a fire under a huge cauldron in a French cafe setting—a fire which wouldn't be hot, because the orchestra, costumed as devils, were to sit in the cauldron. Undaunted by the lack of suggestions as to how to overcome such a difficulty, the chief property maker set about his problem and soon conceived a heatless fire. This was made up of a large number of irregular strips of flame-colored tissue paper, which, blown upward by air currents from concealed fans and lighted by concealed lights, made most realistic flames in the eye of the camera, as they lapped around the bottom of the cauldron.

In another picture, the director wished to make a comedy scene in which the chief figure of the picture, in desperation to get away from several women who wished to marry him, jumped from a yacht and started swimming for shore several miles away and swam so fast that he passed up and left in

his wake a huge fish which came to the surface to give him a race or in hopes of making a meal of some part of his anatomy. As motion pictures haven't yet advanced to that stage of perfection where a director can give orders to a large fish and expect the latter to execute them before the camera, the problem was taken up with the property wizard, who in a few days prepared a mechanical fish which filled all the requirements to perfection.

Again, a director wanted a mechanical stork who would fly into a scene, land on a chimney top, drop a baby, which he held bundled up in a cloth in his bill, and then fly out of the scene again. They built for him a stork which answered all requirements and which was a mechanical wonder of the age, so naturally did it play its part in the picture.

When a director wants some property or effect for a picture, he doesn't generally have many suggestions to offer as to how it should be provided. He merely tells his wants, explains the nature of the scenes involved and leaves it to the mechanics to figure out the problem. And they always find a way. Whether it be a difficult trick explosion, a lightning or electrical storm effect, a perfect miniature of a beautiful home, the Capitol at Washington, the Eiffel tower or a lighthouse on a rock-bound coast, they always deliver the goods. In making miniatures of all kinds, the property makers work solely from photographs of the originals, getting their proper perspective and then bringing the miniature down to proportionate dimensions.

The property shop resembles a huge toy shop and would be the delight of any young boy or girl. Miniatures of all kinds hang suspended from the ceiling and walls. Here is a perfect toy model of a beautiful dwelling, complete in every detail; there is a complete assortment of working models of ships of all kinds from ocean liners and submarines to sailing yawls. In another corner may be found several airplanes of various kinds. Over here is a beautiful model of a bridge and nearby a set of miniature railroad coaches and an infinite variety of small models which would make the shop look like the workshop of old Santa Claus in the eyes of the average youngster.

During his experience in the studio, one chief property maker has made mechanical flies, bees and other insects and animals and recently he was called upon to prepare huge wings and fasten them to a live alligator and to prepare a set of large tusks and fasten them in his mouth, thus converting him into a huge flying dragon, a fanciful monster which was used in a fantastic scene in a picture. One director found that for one of his pictures he would need several hundred guns of the type such as used by the Arab horsemen. As it was impossible to get such a supply of these guns without long search and delay and considerable expense, the matter was taken up with the "impossible" department. The mechanics obtained a photograph of the gun from a travel book in the research department and within a week had a supply made up. And the guns so nearly resembled the real that only close inspection would prove the fake. Photographically, the illusion was perfect.

For a death cell scene in another picture, a replica of the electric chair at Sing Sing prison was needed, among other fittings for the duplicate setting. Again, with a photograph of the Sing Sing chair of death as his guide, the property wizard and his crew prepared an exact duplicate in a few days' time. Of course, the chair wasn't constructed exactly of the same materials as the original, but in the eye of the camera it registered exactly the same.

Many of the articles prepared in this shop, however, must be practical to a certain degree. During the war, when the many pictures with the war as a background were being produced, on several occasions prop cannons and pieces of heavy artillery had to be constructed. These were so made that charges could be fired from them, which would register photographically as the firing of big shells. The charge, made up also by the property experts, consisted of six portions of powder with a cap for each portion, connected with a wire, which in turn connected with a battery. These portions were numbered "1," "2," "3," etc., and the man who was to plunge the battery at a given signal, exploded first number one, then two and so on. During the production of war pictures, one mechanical

department turned out over seventy-five big pieces of prop artillery of various calibers and designs.

One of the most interesting settings ever seen in a picture was one known as "the storeroom of Moloch," representing the secret war room of the Kaiser, where all the models of the various war devices were supposedly stored just prior to the war. This setting was fully equipped with models, all kinds of war engines, airplanes, Zeppelins, bombs, flame throwers, mines, gas bombs, etc. Many of the real articles with which to decorate the setting were secured from private collections, but many of them had to be made up from photographs by the crew of property makers. These imitations photographed so perfectly that it was impossible for the spectator to distinguish them from the real.

Other interesting properties and effects devised and executed by various property shops, include the following:

A device consisting of a small rubber bag and connecting tube, used in the scenes of a picture where an aged actor supposedly slashes his wrist and the blood gushes from the wound. The rubber bag was filled with prop blood and placed under the actor's arm. The tube ran down his sleeve and terminated at the spot from which the blood was to issue. In the close-up scene, the actor merely presses the bag with his arm and the blood gushes from the end of the tube, giving the effect of a severed artery in the wrist.

A working oil well gusher used in a picture in which a small oil town was the principal locale. A regulation sized derrick was erected on the outskirts of the town setting. A pipe line ran from the bottom of the derrick to a spot outside the camera lines. A fire engine was connected up with the pipe line and at the given signal, water which had previously been colored black so that it would photograph like oil, was pumped by the engine through the pipe line with considerable pressure and gushed upward in the derrick. The effect was a perfect imitation of an oil gusher.

Scenes where a locomotive engine plows through a snow-shed on a mountain curve. A miniature engine was secured, mountain scenery was constructed and camouflaged at a curve in the miniature line track and several tons of salt and asbestos

flakes scattered and banked up on the track. The engine is run headlong into the snowbank and after two or three attempts, plows through the snow and continues on its course. The camera was set close enough to the scene, with other scenery in proportionate size, so that the engine looked the regulation size on the screen.

Complete prop furnishings for the island scenes in a shipwreck episode of a certain picture. These included roughly-built chairs, tables and other furniture. A stone still, a working fire signal system to signal any passing ships, bamboo cups, wooden cutlery and many other things that would be worked out by the ingenuity of man if placed in such a strait, were made.

Artificial reproductions of desert date palm trees, used in building the oasis for the scenes in a picture much of which is enacted in a desert locale, and a prop lake in this oasis, which was made by laying canvas in a shallow excavation and filling the hollow with water.

This is only a representative smattering of the many thousands of effects and devices which have been conceived and executed by this unique department.

"No one will ever know all there is to know about motion picture properties and effects," is the declaration of F. S. Madigan, one of the most skillful property makers in the profession, "because there is something new arising every day—some new problem to be solved. After several years in the studio, I often realize that I am only a beginner in the work and the game is yet very new."



CHAPTER X

CASTING THE CHARACTERS



HAVING completed an insight into several of the preliminary stages of motion picture production work, we are now ready to choose the players who are to enact the various roles in our picture.

This is the work of the casting director, who, because of the responsibility attached to his position, is one of the principal figures in importance in the film industry.

To visualize the type, characteristics, temperament and physical and mental qualities of the conceived characters of the story and to determine the actors or actresses who can best interpret those parts upon the screen and secure the services of those actors and actresses, is his extremely trying task, with the commencement of each new film play.

Such a task may not seem on first thought to be so difficult or trying, but let us consider. In the first place, there is an infinite variety of characterizations to be filled in any large studio where several unit companies are being cast all at the same time. This necessitates a rare qualification. The casting director must be a keen student and judge of human nature and human character. He must be able to pick types who look and act the part naturally. If the story calls for a weakling, he must pick a man with a weak face. If the story calls for a suave, heavy or an East Side crook, he must call to mind someone on his list whose face and characteristics convey such an impression.

From this it follows that the casting director must be a man of long experience in the theatrical and motion picture professions. He must be intimately acquainted with the type and ability of a good majority of all the actors and actresses

on the stage and screen. Such a knowledge can be built up only by years of association with stage and screen talent in a professional way.

"For a point of general information," says one of the most famous screen casting directors, "we try to know a little something about everybody who wears a make-up from stars to the cheapest extra people, whether we contemplate using them or not. We never can tell when we will need just such a character as a certain person might be best fitted for, both from a standpoint of type and acting ability and the only way around the problem is to know them all, or as many as possible."

In order to accomplish this colossal aim, the casting director finds it necessary to keep constantly in touch with what the players are doing, by seeing their work on the screen. This means that he must see at least ten or twelve pictures every week—not only those of his own production company, but those of other western and eastern organizations as well. When he looks at a picture, he takes special notice of the work of each player in the cast, just how much ability he manifests, what possibilities he may have, how he photographs and for what kind of parts he is best fitted. When a well-known actor or actress arrives in the town where the casting director is active, he ascertains what pictures are in town, if any, in which he or she plays a part, and then arranges to see those pictures. If possible, he sees them in the theatre, as the opinion of the audience is always valuable. It is the audience whom he is trying to satisfy in casting his pictures.

In considering a player for a part, he arranges to have the director of the proposed picture and often the studio manager or supervising director sit in with him while he runs a reel or two showing the work of the player in some other picture. In matters of such importance, several heads are better than one.

In casting his players, the sensible casting director always tries to combine type with the ability to act. In fact, if it comes to an absolute showdown, histrionic ability will supersede type, because the good actor can assume expressions other than his own, but the type without ability cannot do justice to a part. The ideal combination is a good actor who is also the right type for the role. This important official cannot afford to

take a man with little or no ability and put him in a part just because he is a correct type. Such a policy would lower the standard of his pictures and his work.

It is also imperative to get as many well-known and capable people as possible in a cast. The unwise producer might say, "The star is popular—she is a good actress, she will carry the picture. We needn't worry about the other players." This is a very poor policy, as the sensible casting director knows. To make a good picture it is necessary to have every characterization interpreted by a good actor or actress, capable, and if possible, famous.

In addition to selecting and employing the players who have already achieved fame and proven their ability, the casting director is constantly on the lookout for new talent. When he discovers new personalities—men or girls who show signs of latent ability—he puts them in small bits. If they do those well, he gives them small parts and so on up the ladder until they have established their respective abilities and can be entrusted to ably execute a big role. It is necessary to keep the new material coming in to supplant those who drop out or change in type because of age or other conditions. Many of the famous screen players of today are discovered and developed right at the studio, without previous experience in theatrical work. These include stars, character players and leading men and women.

The great army of extra people, many of whom depend upon the studios for the wherewithal for their daily existence, is another interesting phase of the casting director's work. There are something like five thousand so-called extras in Los Angeles and Hollywood. The percentage of these that climb to the top and achieve success is about one in every five hundred. The great majority of them will never be ranked as anything else but extras. Not a day passes but what a few new people make their appearance in the offices of the various casting directors and make known their desire to work in motion pictures.

Nearly every extra player or beginner labors under the impression that he or she can easily act. They do not fully realize the verity that acting is an art and one that cannot be

picked up over night. It requires study and work and faithful application, just the same as music or painting or any of the kindred arts. The desire to shine as a professional seems to be one of the common traits of humanity. It is up to the casting director to determine just which ones, out of the great number, have latent talent or possibilities.

The first impression which this executive gets of a new aspirant counts for much. Some, he can take one look at and realize that they have not one chance in a thousand years to succeed as an actor or actress. Others, he can see might perhaps be useful as types and he catalogues them as such. Others show promise of good possibilities for several kinds of work—show versatility and histrionic ability. Those that are given an opportunity, he keeps in mind and watches closely. He watches them work on the set, watches their work on the daily "takes" in the projection room, studies their abilities, personalities, etc.

It is a constant process of elimination—taking the entire mass and eliminating the great majority who are unfitted, leaving the few who are fitted. He cannot afford to ignore them all and be content with the talent he has. New faces and personalities must be found, for the sake of variety and to replace those who are continually dropping out or changing in type or ability.

The result of this elimination is that the casting director maintains, at all times, a sort of reserve of about a hundred extra people—boys, girls, men and women, who have been tried and proven, whom he knows can do the work, who have satisfied the directors and who can be depended upon. This reserve, of course, is also constantly being altered.

"It must be remembered, however," encourages one of the most prominent screen casting officials, "that the motion picture profession is much the same as any other in regard to making the most of opportunities. It is the person with ability and initiative who gets to the top and I do not believe it is an exaggeration to say that it is possible to 'arrive' in less time, in motion pictures, than in any other professional line. The person with the right combination of qualities generally pops up very suddenly."

The average casting office has a very complete set of files which are cross indexed and double indexed to save time and make them more practicable. For every principal, free-lance and extra player, there is a big card with figures giving his or her height, weight and other physical data. These are cross-indexed into files of types, segregating heavies, juveniles, character people, leading women, leading men, etc.

The casting director begins his work of selection after his first conference with the writer of the story or scenario, wherein he obtains a definite idea of the story and characters. He then goes through his list of players in the files. He chooses a leading man and if the latter is available, puts him down for the part, and so on with the other players. When the first draft of the scenario is finished, the casting director receives a copy and proceeds with his work of casting. In this he confers with the director, the supervising director and possibly the studio general manager. By the time the picture is ready to start, a complete cast of characters has been assembled.

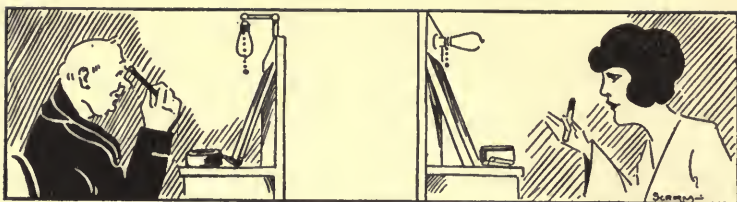
There is humor and pathos as well as plenty of detail in the work of the casting director and his engagement department. People come with a thousand and one reasons why they should be engaged immediately. They bring letters, recommendations, scrap-books and so on. They come again and again. Sometimes, this busy individual regrets exceedingly that it is impossible to give certain ones work because he has at that time nothing which exactly fits them or their type. One of the most poignant tragedies is the old time actor or actress who is down and out. Sometimes they can get extra work—quite often in fact, but one can sense the sorrow in their hearts as they watch this newer form of the dramatic art gaining ground and realize that they were born a generation too soon to take advantage of it. Yet the films have been a boon to a good many of these people who might otherwise have to depend on the charity of the most charitable group in the world—the acting profession.

It is a most interesting sight to watch the characters who come to the window of the casting director's office during the course of the average day. Old men and young, old women, girls in their teens, tall, short, thin, stout, of every race under

the sun. Some older men with flowing beards and hair, who are fine as certain types, such as prospectors, old time plainsmen, miners and so on. The barbers have suffered by the films—so many extra people let their hair and beards grow for business' sake!

The casting director secures many of his extra people from outside organizations such as service and casting bureaus who have great numbers of all types listed and can send out any number of desired types on a day's notice.

The hiring of Chinese to play extra parts in the films is an interesting side-light. There is one man in Los Angeles—a Chinese interpreter, who controls the Chinese extra player situation. He is an American born but spent much of his life in China and speaks the language and knows the customs of the Orientals. When the casting director wants a large number of Chinese players for atmosphere in a picture, he applies to this man, who brings in the Chinese, sees that they are at work on time, is responsible for their reappearance for duty the next day or any day thereafter that they are needed, and interprets to them the orders of the director of the picture on the setting.



CHAPTER XI

SCREEN MAKE-UP



MAKE-UP, or the art of making up for the screen, while it cannot be included as one of the cogs of our production machine, is nevertheless one of the major incidental arts, vital and necessary to the making of motion pictures and is thus one of the points of interest in our journey from Pen to Silversheet. Also, it falls in naturally with the theme of our discourse, for after the player is cast for the role, he must first make-up before he can play his part.

Many are perhaps of the impression that make-up is a very simple art and involves merely the application of a little grease-paint on the face of the actor or actress. On the other hand, it is a very intricate art and one which requires much patience, study and practice before it can be successfully and thoroughly mastered.

There are two different broad divisions of screen make-up. These are straight make-up and character make-up. The straight make-up is the one worn by the player who merely covers his own complexion with a ground-tone of grease paint and lines his eyes and eyebrows, and tones up his lips with a little rouge. This will be more thoroughly covered in the ensuing discussion of the character make-up, which is much more intricate and involves all the various phases of the make-up art.

The screen aspirant who looks himself over in the mirror and decides that because he is not handsome enough to be a star or heroic enough to be a leading man, he will be a character actor, does not realize perhaps that that field of work, while

not the most lucrative, is often said to be the most difficult of all branches—for he must master the art of character make-up.

A well-known screen character actor has observed that the art of character make-up—far from being simply a knowledge of how to make up one's face—is divided into three separate and distinct branches. These are FACIAL make-up, PHYSICAL make-up and MENTAL make-up. By a knowledge of these subjects, the character artist must often change his entire physiognomy and personality to suit the role for which he has been cast. The actor in question has become so versatile with his make-up ability that this has actually become a damper on his fame, because of the fact that so different does he appear in his many and varied characterizations that screen audiences find it hard to recognize him as the same actor who has played some of his former parts.

The essential foundation for all facial make-up is the grease paint. This is first applied evenly over the face and this first application is known as the "ground tone." If this tone becomes spotted or marred, it cannot be patched up, but must be completely removed and a new coat applied. If the subject has a pink or ruddy complexion, pink grease paint is used, and if the complexion is brunette or sallow, a yellow tone is applied. This is because the make-up must harmonize with the complexion because if a contrasting color is used, the camera will register spots on the complexion where the make-up is thin and the skin shows through.

The basic principle of character facial make-up is the principle of high lights and low lights. Certain colors, such as red, brown, black, dark grey, orange, purple, etc., register photographically as shadows and thus when applied in the proper manner, can be used to accentuate wrinkles, make sunken cheeks or other like effects. These colors, when applied, are known as "low lights." It has often been asked why screen actors and actresses, unlike those on the legitimate stage, use no rouge on their cheeks in their make-up. This is because the rouge would photograph dark and register as a shadow, causing the handsome leading man or pretty ingenue to look thin and emaciated in the face.

The opposite effect to the low light is the "high light." Any

light color, such as white, light grey, light blue, etc., is a high light and is used for a purpose directly opposite from that for which the low light is used. The high light color, photographically, produces a convex or outstanding effect. A low light is generally edged with a high light color to further accentuate the low light, and vice versa. This important principle is applied in making up wrinkles, sunken cheeks, lines, scars, sagging skin, overhanging eyebrows, sunken eye sockets, etc. The wrinkle is made by a line of low light color, edged on one side with a faint line of high light. The red low light is of inestimable value to the actress who, as the years go by, develops the fatal double chin. The red streak of rouge throws the invisible mantle over this drawback to screen beauty.

The make-up scar is produced in a way directly opposite from the method used in making up a wrinkle. The scar is a high light color, lined or set off with a low light color. For freckles, little daubs of brown grease paint are used.

An important point to be remembered is that make-up is chiefly an accentuating agent. When the character actor makes up wrinkles or other facial lines, he should first assume the expression of the character and then accentuate lines natural to that expression and should never make wrinkles or lines where they do not naturally occur.

The good make-up artist must also be familiar with the many varieties of wigs, beards, moustaches, false teeth, etc., and must know for which kind of character type each is best fitted.

There are also many artificial effects in make-up such as the pulling of certain muscles by attaching strings to the muscle by the use of putty and then tying the strings and pulling the muscles until the desired effect is obtained. This method is often used in the Chinese make-up, when the eyes are pulled back at the corners, making them resemble the eyes of a Chinaman. Putty is also employed in making enlarged or crooked character noses. Enlarged pores are made in the putty nose by sticking little indentations therein with the point of a scissors. The putty nose is then made up just like the rest of the face, with grease paint, etc.

After completing his facial make-up, the character artist

must look to what we have already termed, his physical make-up. He must be sure that his wardrobe is right, for his wardrobe, after all, is a part of his make-up. If he is playing a tramp, he must be sure his clothes look old and ragged and if they are in too good a state of preservation, he must take a file and make a few frayed spots or ragged edges in the material. He might also use a little soap or Fuller's earth to give the proper effects of grime and age.

Physical make-up, however, also includes the assumption by the actor and the physical expression, of all the proper mannerisms and physical conditions characteristic of the role he is portraying. If the character is awkward in his movements, the actor must also remember to be awkward in every scene in which he appears before the camera. If the character has a wooden leg or an artificial hand, the actor must make up his hand or his limb so that such an impression is conveyed to the audience. A certain well-known character actor once performed a perfect feat of character make-up art by making his own perfectly good hand look exactly like an artificial hand. Many pictures have been seen in which the actors have been photographed in various difficult physical make-ups, and one, in particular, will be remembered by many, in which the character player was made up so that he most strikingly resembled a huge ape. In some of these most difficult make-ups the services of a professional make-up expert are required.

By mental make-up is meant the mental state of the actor when playing a character part. It can easily be seen how it is most necessary that the actor strive to be, in thought, as well as physically, as nearly like the character he portrays as possible. This makes for sincerity and promotes a more faithful interpretation of the role. The correct mental attitude is a keynote to a perfect character portrayal. It has been said that a person's face and physique are only an outward expression of his mentality. Therefore, if the actor keeps the right mental attitude during his work, the physical part of him will conform. If, for instance, he doesn't lose sight, for a moment, of the fact that for the time being, he is an awkward, ungainly, bowlegged cowpuncher, his physical actions will more readily respond to this condition of thought. Or, if he will keep in

mind continually that he is impersonating a county judge or a military officer, the natural dignity characteristic of such characters will be reflected in his every physical move and expression. This will apply to any kind of characterization he may interpret.

One noted stock character actor, who once played six different characterizations all in one week, in six different pictures, confided that one of the secrets of his success as a make-up artist is the fact that he has in mind an actual model for nearly every character he portrays.

"I never fail to carefully observe any odd or striking character whom I chance to see on the street or outside my studio work," he explained. "I have a mental list of characters upon which I draw when in need of inspiration for some role. When I see an unusual character, I watch his actions, engage him in conversation, possibly, observe his gestures, his mannerisms, his outstanding features, even his inward character, and temperament, if possible, then store him up for future reference. I once studied a half-wit newsboy uptown and it wasn't a week before I was called upon to play a half-wit in a picture. I had my model and was well prepared and experienced no difficulty in making up and playing the part. When I can think of no model to fit an important character role, I have often gone down on the streets and kept my eyes open until one has come under my observation. In case the character is an ancient or obsolete one, I look him up in books, read about him or his kind and get a picture of him if possible."

Thus, it will be seen that the art of make-up, in all its ramifications, is an intricate one, which requires much study, observation and natural talent and constant application on the part of the actor, to the perfection of his art.



CHAPTER XII

HUNTING LOCATIONS



N location!"

That is a familiar expression around a motion picture studio. When a company is on location, it is operating at some site away from the studio, perhaps only around the corner at a building entrance, perhaps at the veranda of some palatial home in the suburbs or the gardens of some country estate, or again perhaps on the desert or in the mountains hundreds of miles away. Hardly ever is a picture produced in which all the scenes are made at the studio. Generally many natural backgrounds are included.

But a company does not simply pack up and start for a location without any preparation. The way must be paved for it. The location must be searched out and found and arrangements made for its use, in case it is private property.

Thus, one of the big tasks in the production of a picture is to find and when necessary, obtain permission to use, such exteriors as will exactly fit the technical and dramatic requirements of the story.

To expedite this phase of the work, relieve the director of the burden of searching out these backgrounds, as was formerly the case, and to build up a system of records by means of which these sites or structures may be easily located again, once they have been found and used, the majority of the larger studios have made a special provision for a department for this purpose, appointing what is known as a "location director" to handle all of this work.

The location director must possess several very important qualifications in order to be able efficiently to execute this part of the work of film production. In the first place, he must

know the country within a radius of several hundred miles around the district where the studio is located and be thoroughly acquainted with the various natural geographical conditions so that he may know in which direction to travel in order to search for any desired location or setting. His job is one that cannot be held by an amateur as it is only by experience that he can build up such a fund of knowledge. Good location directors are very scarce because it is only those who have grown up with the job from its very institution who have so acquainted themselves with the exterior field as to be in a position to efficiently handle such a post.

He must be a man of keen observation and good memory, because one of the secrets of his efficiency is his ability to keep ahead of the game, as it were, by observing and taking note, during his travels, of sites which might perhaps be valuable as locations at some future time and later, when such sites are needed, to be able to find them quickly by reference to his records.

He must be a man of tact and diplomacy in order that he might overcome in many cases, the objections which will be raised by owners or landlords of private properties against the use by motion picture companies of such properties. Since the beginning of the motion picture industry, there have been many independent small companies which have been formed perhaps for the production of only one picture. In many cases, the directors of these companies, having no future reputation to consider, have been negligent in their care of location property and have left it in a damaged condition after finishing their scenes. This has been resented by property owners generally, many of whom have judged the majority by the few and have flatly refused to allow any other motion picture companies to operate upon their premises on subsequent occasions, despite the offers of the latter to pay liberally and to leave the property in the same condition in which it was found.

It has been the task of location directors of large companies to overcome this prejudice on the part of the property owners and to obtain permission to use the sites. In doing this, he must sometimes work in a round-about way, gaining

the permission either through other influences or by convincing the property owner of the reputation of the company which is behind him, for good, clean business. In this, his personality plays an important rôle, and when the company goes to film its scenes, he often goes along, in case private property is being used, to personally watch and see that his promises are kept by the production company. The good location director considers his standing with property owners his most valuable asset and never breaks faith.

Locations are absolutely essential to motion picture work and by their use, millions of dollars are saved annually, which would otherwise have to be expended in the construction of elaborate exterior settings, many of which would be used perhaps for only a few scenes.

The location director also encounters some very difficult problems in his search for natural geographical locations. When the scenario is finished, he takes a copy of the script and makes a list of the locations which he sees will be needed and their specifications as laid out in the story. He then sets about finding these locations. Sometimes he must get in his car and travel hundreds of miles for a desert or ocean or mountain scene. He might find hundreds of such scenes, each of which might be just a bit off-color. He must continue his search until he finds a site which exactly fits or one which, by the aid of technical alterations, can be made suitable. There is no alternative but to find it and he must keep up the search until he does find it. He always works with the assumption that the very thing he needs exists and can be found, and the good location director always finds it. Nor does he have weeks and months in which to search. He must very often find the site within a specified time, which is often limited to a few days. Otherwise, production will be held up.

According to one of the oldest location directors in the profession, in the matter of experience, a policy of his company, while often gaining for him the permission of the landlord or owner where all other means would have failed, is one which at the same time has made it possible for the studio to have been a very valuable contributor to charity during the past few years. Many of the beautiful homes, gardens and

estates which the location director seeks to rent as settings for scenes in his pictures, are owned by wealthy people who would not for a moment be persuaded by a money consideration to allow their property to be used. Philanthropy, however, is one of the hobbies of most wealthy people, and when they are told that the rental derived from the use of the property is to be turned directly over to some charity, they are generally more willing to concede to the request of the location director. Thousands and thousands of dollars have been turned over to charity during a few years through this medium. One instance is of a Los Angeles millionaire who always gives the rental obtained from motion picture companies for the use of his yacht in film scenes, to the Sisters' Hospital in Los Angeles. One of the companies used the Boyle Heights Orphans' Home at one time and although the Sisters demanded no rental, the company presented them with a check for five hundred dollars to be added to the Orphans' fund.

The location director has saved the company thousands of dollars by finding suitable locations when otherwise settings would have had to be built. On one occasion, the company assumed that it would be impossible to find a home that would exactly suit their needs because of the peculiar requirements of the story and were on the point of going ahead and beginning the construction of an exterior which it was planned would cost about eight thousand dollars. The location director, however, insisted upon making a search and was told to go ahead. He found, after some effort, an exterior which was exactly what was wanted. Permission was gained to use this for one hundred dollars. This is only one case out of many wherein the location director has saved the company large sums of money.

During a period of four months, one prominent location director found and obtained permission to use sixty-eight major locations. This did not include hundreds of smaller backgrounds which were either already on file or were obtained without any difficulty. In San Francisco, the same director once obtained permission from the government to take a shot from Fort Scott, also to film scenes aboard the quarantine boat.

During his experience, this particular location man has traveled on an average of fifteen thousand miles per year looking for location sites. He declares that the hardest locations to find are those which must match up with some background in which action has already been filmed in or outside the studio. They must have certain specifications which must exactly match with this previous scene.

The system of filing in use by leading location directors, is pictorial, containing pictures of every location which has ever been filmed and many of which have never been filmed, with information on the back of each picture as to where the site is located, when it was filmed, how much it can be rented for, etc. There is a key index to this file, entitled, "INDEX TO THE LOCATION PHOTOGRAPH FILE." The main heads of this index are: "Automobiles," "Big Buildings," "Desert Scenes," "Homes and Estates," "Homes—Ordinary and Poor," "Hotels and Apartments," "Mountain Scenery," "Rural Scenery," "Railroad," "Small Towns," "Water Scenes." Under each one of these principal heads are from ten to fifteen subheads, each numbered, with a number corresponding to that on the envelope file containing the pictures. For instance, under "Automobiles," the subheads are: "1—Busses," "2—Closed Cars," "3—Foreign Cars," "4—Open Cars," "5—Taxicabs," and under "Hotels and Apartments," we find the following: "1—Entrances," "2—Fashionable Hotels and Apartments," "3—Fire Escapes," "4—Ordinary Hotels and Apartments," "5—Roofs," "6—Seaside Hotels (See Water Scenes)." By means of this file, anyone can easily locate the picture and find all necessary information about the site.

Location directors are unanimous in their belief that Southern California is perhaps the most ideal spot in the world for motion picture locations and sites, because natural scenery typical of almost any part of the world can be found there.

Let us pause for a moment in our journey from Pen to Silversheet and observe, as an interesting sidelight, one of the large location encampments of a big company which has gone to a distant spot for several days to film exterior scenes and see the manner in which it is conducted and how the studio folk live while on location.

The site is about a three-hour drive from the mother studio in Hollywood and there we find the prettiest little imitation of a piece of the Old Sahara that was ever created by Nature and touched up and camouflaged by the ingenuity of man. This was the desert site used for the Sahara scenes in George Melford's production for Paramount, "The Sheik."

At this point, the beach extends back from the ocean for about two miles and the fine white sand is in rifts or dunes. Here and there is a bald mound of sand, and between the rifts or mounds, are smooth, barren valleys. A few patches of typical desert vegetation dot the landscape. To the practiced eye of the location director, this was an ideal spot for scenes depicting the Sahara desert.

The principal thing that this desert lacked was an oasis, so the studio mechanical artists made up a large bunch of date palm trees from fine strips of lumber, canvas and brown paint and set them up in an appropriate spot, then finished the job with a bountiful supply of oasis vegetation. Within five days a beautiful oasis stood where before all was barren sand.

Two hundred people departed from the studio in large sightseeing automobiles for the journey to this little Sahara. These included director, assistants, cameramen, principal players, extras, Arab riders and their horses and two special technical experts on Arabia and the Orient.

Work began next day, after camp had been set up. Often the set-up for a scene would cover many acres of ground and the director, unable to make himself heard through the megaphone, was compelled to ride about on a horse among the furthestmost players and give his instructions or relay them out to assistants who were concealed from the camera lens. Near the camera stood the bugler, who signalled the players back to formation after the completion of a "shot."

Now we see a late afternoon set-up of the Arab clan of horsemen, dismounted and standing in formation for prayer, led by a bearded old Arab. We turn our gaze from this colorful sight and over in the oasis see about seventy-five girls. Some are beautiful, some plain. There are types of all kinds—harem girls, slave girls, market women, old hags, youngsters.

Some are beautifully costumed in silks and laces, others are dressed in rags and loud-colored coarser materials. All are covered from head to foot with the much detested yellow ochre, a make-up wash which under the eye of the camera, gives them all the sunburnt hue of the people of the tropics.

Looking in another direction, we see a couple of property men come out bearing a huge skeleton of a camel and place it on the desert in the camera range, for the sake of atmosphere. This skeleton, we learn, has been made up in the studio property shop. There are several others on hand, if needed.

The system under which the camp was conducted and the magnitude of the task of camping, feeding and providing quarters for the three hundred people was impressive. Everything was done in an orderly, systematic way. There were army cots for everyone present. The horsemen were assigned several to each large tent and the girls were housed two each in small tents. There was a large cook tent where several cooks were constantly employed, preparing food. Another tent was the storehouse for quantities of foodstuffs of all kinds and still another contained the large hampers for a supply of costumes and wardrobe. Two men were assigned to check these costumes in and out for each day's work. There were two large dining tents and two mess calls for each tent. At one end of the camp street was a concession where soft drinks, cigarettes and candy could be bought. Over near another tent was a small camera dark room, where the cameramen could load and unload their film. Water for the camp was shipped in large tanks mounted on motor trucks. Near the "chow" tent was the camp post office, consisting of two boxes nailed to a tree—one marked "incoming" and the other "outgoing" mail. Before and after "shooting" hours when girls, women and Arab horsemen were strolling about the camp, laughing, talking and engaged in various little diversions, the place resembled a gay, colorful carnival.

At six A. M. every morning, all arose to the reveille and dressed for breakfast. In a few moments, the camp was a beehive of activity. Everyone scurried about, washing his face in a pan or bowl, going for water, making impromptu toilets

before pieces of mirror hung in convenient places and doing his best to get in readiness for the first mess call. Some donned bathing suits and hiked over the half-mile of sand to the ocean to take an early morning dip and get back in time for the second mess call.

The ringing of the bell meant a rush for the "chow" tents. These were soon filled with a happy, laughing, talking, eating group, who sat down on long benches before long tables and were served with good eatables in healthy quantities.

After breakfast everyone busied himself with making up. Before a long table on which stood several large bottles of the yellow make-up fluid, the numerous extras lined up and washed all the exposed parts of their bodies with the solution, then applied their facial make-ups. The morning mail was read while waiting for the sun to penetrate the fog. Of course, there were the camp sprites—in this case, two little extra girls. Clad in overalls when not in costume, they kept up a continual round of mischief and practical jokes, received admonitions from the director every day, but all to no avail. Their mischief was highly enjoyed by all and when things began to look dull, they would see all the more opportunity to liven the situation with innocent fun.

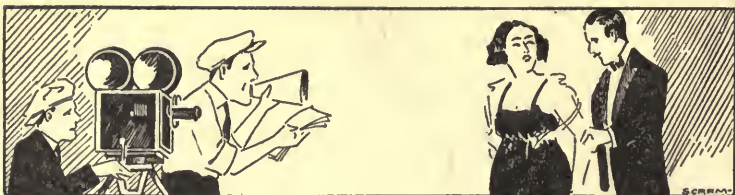
The lunch mess bell meant another break for camp. If scenes were being taken out on the sand, several hundred yards from the camp, the Arab horsemen made the best charge of the day as they broke in disordered confusion in a rapid sprint for the camp. There was always a "clean house" in the mess tent after the two rounds of lunches had been consumed. Those among the party who were talented in a musical way, generally got in at the first call and while the second mess was being served, gathered round in a circle with their instruments and rendered a few selections.

Following an afternoon of work and another dip in the ocean by many members of the company, the same rush for food would take place about seven P. M. After the last "chow" of the day, the shades of night began to mantle the novel camp. The camp musicians would again get busy and soft music under the starlit canopy of Nature, punctuated by the distant booming of the surf, was a fitting finish for a day big

with accomplishments. This was the unwritten program every evening except the one Friday night when all the company turned out in a body to attend the movie ball given in its honor by the citizens of the nearest town. Khaki, overalls and camp togs predominated at this affair, among the screen celebrities, male and female, and all of the people of the town danced and mingled in joyous revelry with the real notables in large numbers.

At ten o'clock the camp quieted down considerably and most of the company, anticipating the early morning call, were already in dreamland. The plaintive, mournful notes of evening taps from a distant bugle seemed to make the quietude supreme, which was then unbroken save for the occasional far-away tinkling of some guitar or mandolin and perhaps, by contrast—the ridiculous bray of one of the caravan camels.

The foregoing is a brief, representative picture of the life of a large motion picture company on location and shows the democratic spirit which prevails among these, the people of Shadowland.



CHAPTER XIII

THE ART OF DIRECTION



HE mystery art of motion pictures!

That's the art of screen direction. The mystery art, because very few directors, however proficient they may be, will attempt to describe or explain it. Without a doubt, the most responsible, the most exacting, the most important executive work within the film production organization—the controlling lever of the production machine, it is for that very reason, perhaps, the hardest to describe, the most puzzling to explain, the most difficult to analyze.

Were one to choose as his subject, "How to direct a motion picture," he might write volumes, and those volumes should involve a discussion of every subject from ancient philosophy to modern dress for women; or he might generalize and cover the entire subject in a few words. It is probable that generalities would convey a better idea of the intricacies of the art than a long, drawn-out confusing discourse, filled with rules and regulations, pointers and suggestions, because the latter would place limitations upon an art. It must be remembered that screen direction is an art and not a mechanical procedure or formula. It cannot be limited by rules, because then it ceases to become an art. Art is an expression of genius and no two geniuses express art alike. The main spring of genius is individuality. Thus, if the aspiring director would read volume after volume of a treatise on how it is done, were he a genius he would probably then proceed to forget everything he had read except vital principles and do things his own way and as his own individuality dictated.

From this it reasonably follows that hardly any two directors direct motion pictures in the same way.

Suffice it to say, however, that the director must have a fairly good working knowledge of every other branch of production, in order to understand their part in his picture, and to supervise their harmonious operation in connection therewith; he should be a keen student of human nature; a broad visioned judge of character; he must have his reserve of history, of art, he must possess a keen sense of dramatic values—he must know life, intimately, in many of its phases and he must be a genius.

Leaving to an expert in this work, a proper presentation and explanation of the art of screen direction, I shall quote at some length, one of our foremost modern screen directors, who, because of the consistent success of his productions, might be taken as a valuable authority on the subject. In answer to my point-blank question, "How do you direct motion pictures?" he began his explanation with the following startling but unique reply:

"I don't know how to direct! I never try to outline just how it is done; I simply make a start and go through with it.

"There is only one qualification that a director must have," he continued. "He must be able to direct! As to how that is done, there are no set formulas. With some directors, it is a matter of common sense, with others it is a question of being foolish in the right way; with me it is a matter of trusting in God and sweating. In general, I should like to remark that as a rule the more a director talks about directing, the bigger fool he is apt to make of himself.

"I believe it is a great mistake for an artist to try to tell how he paints, because if he is a good artist, he doesn't know. He has no definite rules to follow. He just takes his brushes and materials and paints. His painting is an expression of his genius—his individuality.

"The relationship of a director to a motion picture is the relationship of a general to an army. He is as strong as the army, but the army is no stronger than the general. Without the proper assistance from the various contributing factors

of film production and the proper kind of actors, the director is helpless, but if the director falls down, the best assistance and the most talented actors in the world won't save his picture. He is the general. To properly utilize and apply the skill and genius of the many various production branches, there must be a central, active head. Otherwise, there would be lost motion and a lack of unity and organization. Therefore, his word must be law. He is the final court of appeal. If he doesn't know what to do in an emergency, he simply falls down. He must make the decision. He has no one to whom to pass the buck. He used to try to pass it to the scenario writer, but that custom is rapidly going out of date. If the picture isn't good, the director really has no one to blame but himself.

"The principles of screen direction depend, of course, a great deal upon the nature of the story. If the story is about human character and human beings, the picture should have something to do with people and not just the way they move their arms and legs. A human being, primarily, is what he has inside—his emotions, his inner soul, not just what is on the physical surface.

"The director ought to know a little about everything under the sun and a great deal about the human 'critter.' He ought to have a keen sense of dramatic values. Sometimes, if he is lucky, he does have.

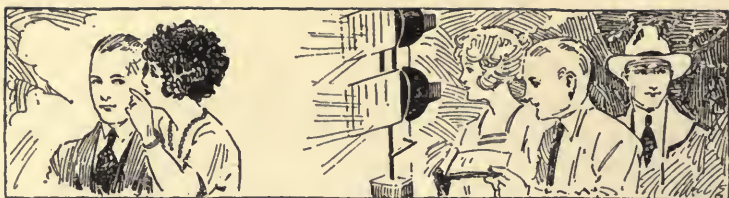
"I try to work with my people in the same way that the conductor of an orchestra works with his musicians. He doesn't teach them how to play. He conducts them—directs them. He takes a number of artists and has them play one thing instead of playing individual things. That is all the conductor can do. His function is to unify the work of a number of artists into one expression, each artist possessing the ability to play perfectly his own instrument. That is what the director of a picture does. Each actor must be able to interpret perfectly his own part. I tell them what, not how. I set the music before them, as it were. I do this by explaining to them the psychology of each situation, what each character stands for in the general scheme of things, and his relation to each and all of the other characters and then leave it to

them to begin to tell me by action and expression just what those respective characters would do under the circumstances.

"Each character must express himself in the terms of his own personality. What would be correct for one actor to do under the circumstances would not be correct for another actor to do, unless they both possessed the same personality. This involves another angle of the work of the director—not fitting the actor to the action but fitting the character to the actor who portrays it. That is what makes for human characterizations and natural acting. In other words, if one is directing grand opera and knows that the tenor can't reach a high 'C' if he couldn't get another tenor, it would be very foolish of him to make the tenor keep trying to sing high 'C' when he could have him sing a different note with an equally harmonious effect, thus fitting the note to the singer instead of making the singer strain his vocal chords to reach the note.

"These are only my ideas of direction. Every director, however, has his own methods and what is right for one and his type of work, might be wrong for another. That is where individuality comes in.

"There is no school for directors. The only way to learn direction is to observe others direct and then to direct. There are, of course, certain elementals which can be picked up or acquired, but the chances are that after he has absorbed these elementals, the director will change them in adapting them to himself. In the matter of direction, I owe more to Mr. David Belasco than to anyone else, but I cannot direct the same way he does. I can only take the principles that I learned from him and use them, not absolutely, but only insofar as they apply to my own individuality. These principles can be expressed, but it is very dangerous to express them. When an artist starts to make rules to govern art, the worst thing that can happen to him is to have to try to follow those rules."



CHAPTER XIV

SCREEN PORTRAYAL

THERE are two kinds of screen portrayal. These might best be designated as straight personality and character interpretation. An illustration of the first class is the actor who always plays roles exactly suited to his or her own individual personality, as in the case of some stars. The actor or actress in this case simply acts naturally, in a role which has been written to exactly fit him, just as he or she would act if placed in the situations contained in the story, injecting into his or her portrayal, the full measure of individual expression and personality.

The second class is the screen artist who assumes a type of characterization entirely foreign to his own natural personality and who maintains that character throughout the entire picture, living, as it were, as a separate identity and never once allowing his own natural self to penetrate the mask of this other being with which he has clothed himself.

It can easily be seen how the latter type of histrionic performance is by far the more difficult of the two. In the one case, the actor expresses only himself, in a made-to-fit or cut-to-measure role. In the latter instance, he steps into the shoes of another and entirely different being.

It is thus not an exaggeration to say that the actor who interprets another character really lives two different lives while engaged in a part. And it is surprising, if the truth be known, just how much of his time and attention a good actor devotes to living the life of the imaginary person whom he brings into existence on the silversheet. A noted actor was once heard to remark: "I spend so much time living and

thinking in character that I have to pause at intervals and take a little while to resume an acquaintance with myself."

The problem of just how the actor or actress adapts him or herself to another being, passing completely out of the confines of his or her own personality, is probably the one that is most difficult to understand and thus most interesting to the person who sits in the audience and views a picture on the screen. On one occasion, he sees his favorite actor playing a particular role possessing a number of typical characteristics. At another time, he sees the same actor in a characterization so entirely different from the former that it is as if two different persons with characteristics entirely foreign to each other, had played the two roles. And so on in every picture in which that certain actor or actress may appear.

Let us try to analyze the principles which govern the art of screen portrayal and show how the results are dependent thereon.

Character interpretation is fundamentally a mental process. It is not, primarily, a question of how an actor moves about before the camera—his mechanical or physical manifestations or expressions. This is, of course, a necessary consideration, but it is secondary. He must first get himself completely absorbed into the character, the attributes, the qualities, temperament and disposition of the subject he is portraying. This is a mental process. The physical part of the job naturally follows after the actor or actress has the character completely in mind.

A good deal of light can be thrown on an explanation of this kind by a comparison of stage and screen acting. In legitimate work, an actor perfects his role more or less mechanically. On the screen, his work is largely creative. On the stage he has a great deal of time to work out his interpretation. He rehearses his lines, his elocution, and his expressions. He draws a veritable plan of the characterization, figuratively speaking and when he comes to play, he can take out that plan and follow it, line for line. After playing the role night after night for a month, he knows it by heart—not only the lines, but every move and every expression. Finally,

it becomes a cut-and-dried affair. He can take it off or put it on at will. When he leaves the theatre he can forget all about it until the next show.

Some actors and actresses have played one legitimate role for as long as two years. While playing that part it was, of course, impossible for that actor or actress to feel the same every night. There were times when he felt badly, other times when he was cross or moody, others when he was happy. But the moment he stepped into that role he would be utterly oblivious to his personal feelings. He began again a mechanical procedure that had been ground in thoroughly. It was possible to get that technique and those mechanics so set that he could give a technical performance no matter how he felt. A certain actor once played a legitimate role for a week, suffering all the time from a broken ankle. But at no time during that week did any one in the audience notice that anything was wrong.

For a motion picture, however, the actor who portrays a distinct character must throw a great deal of thought into that characterization, not only while on the set, but at all times—in his dressing room, outside the studio, at his home. He does not form a habit as he does after continual rehearsals of a stage part. He must be creative every moment he works. Every scene is different and he does not work in sequence—that is, he does not begin with the first scene in the picture and go straight through to the last. He might begin with the middle scene of the picture. Therefore, he must possess spontaneity and to do that he must keep his mind full of the character. He must be able to take him up at any point in the story, haphazard. If his mind wanders away from that imaginary being he will make a false move and allow a wrong interpretation to slip in.

When the wise actor or actress first hears the nature of the character he or she is to play for a screen role, he begins to absorb the characteristics of that subject and continue so to do until it is a very part of him.

Suppose an actor starts to work on a studio set. He is playing an unusual character. The director explains a bit of

action—tells him, for a simple example, to enter the door, find a letter on the table, pick it up and read it and realize it is a good-bye message from a loved one who has proven false and deserted. There are a million different ways of doing this—a different way for every different human being on earth. Which is the right way in this particular instance? The way the character in question would do it. And how would he do it? The only way to determine that is to have that character so well in mind that unconsciously the actor will do it just as would the character. This should clearly illustrate the vast importance of a right mental attitude on the part of the actor.

Conrad Nagel, former stage favorite and now prominent screen actor, once related an incident which concretely shows the fatality of a mental laxity on the part of a screen actor in portraying the character with which he has been entrusted, and is a specific case in point.

"There was one day," said Mr. Nagel, "during the filming of 'What Every Woman Knows,' when for a few moments I allowed my mind to wander from the character of John Shand, which I was portraying. I played a scene and a false note slipped in. John Shand was not conceited, but he was a very egotistical young man. But his very egotism was directly responsible for his success. Had he been conceited, he would not have been successful, but his egotism—his absolute unflinching confidence in himself, swept him on to victory. I had to be very careful at all times to make a distinction between these two qualities in the man. An expression of the one was fatal—the other, expressed, was his principal characteristic. On this particular day, I was not thinking very much about the character. The scene was the one in which John Shand walked into the room in which a delegation of women were waiting to see him. I walked in with a little strut and swing of the shoulders that conveyed a wrong expression. Conceit was written all over such an entrance and conceit was absolutely foreign to the character of John Shand. I wasn't thinking what I was doing. I had let my mind slip out of tune with the character. The scene didn't look bad in the projection room and I didn't realize the mistake until the picture was all

assembled and I saw the contrast of his attitude in this one scene with his characteristics in all the other scenes. It was a discordant note in the characterization of John Shand."

It is because of the creative nature of his daily work that the screen actor must be mentally on the job at all times. He must feel tip-top every day he works. If he isn't feeling good, or if his mind is in any wise occupied with other things or distracted from the central idea, he can't do his work right.



CHAPTER XV

CINEMATOGRAPHY



IGHTEEN thousand dollars for a single motion picture camera! This astounding figure, representing the amount of money which has been invested in one of the machines through which the narrow strip of film runs, to be exposed with a light and shadow impression of the scene which is staged before it, will perhaps illustrate, more conclusively than it could be otherwise stated, the important part which this little machine plays in the big complex art of film production.

Upon the camera and the skill of the man who operates it, hinges all the other branches of this many sided work, because if the camera fails to record the action and expressions of the players and the beauty of the settings and backgrounds, the work of all those who have put their energy and genius into such vital processes will have been in vain. The camera is the agency by which the works of all these various contributing factors are materialized; the wonder machine which condenses them all into one little strip of film, which, at the completion of the picture, is all that the producers have to show for all the time, genius, money and gray matter that has been expended in the production of the photoplay.

Is it any wonder, then, that the camera has been developed from its first crude state, to the present elaborate, perfect mechanical device which it is and that some cameramen have seen fit to invest snug fortunes in this little machine, equipping it with all the various lenses, devices and improvements which the modern age has made possible?

The motion picture camera works on the same principle as the still photographic camera, except that it takes many pictures

in the time that the still camera would take one picture. The film runs through the camera at a rapid rate and as a rule, about sixteen exposures, or separate tiny pictures are made with every second of time or every turn of the camera crank. Thus, as the players perform, these pictures, following each other in rapid succession, record continuous sequences of motion and when run through the projection machine and flashed on to a screen, reproduce that motion of the players. The little skips in between each picture, as one jumps away from the projection lens and is replaced by another which advances the motion a whit further, are covered by a shutter which is synchronized to cover the lens during these extremely short intervals. The human eye is not quick enough to catch these changes as the film speeds through the projection machine and the illusion of continuous motion on the part of the players, is all that appears to the eye of the spectator.

The slower the film is turned in the camera, the faster the action of the players when projected on the screen, because there are larger breaks in their motion, which are filled in by the imagination of the spectator as he watches the illusion flashing before him. In the same way, the faster the cameraman operates his machine while photographing a scene, the slower the action of the players when the film is projected. This principle allows for many speed and slow motion effects, which would otherwise be impossible. Thus, a stunt scene where an actor jumps from a moving railway train to an automobile alongside, or something on that same order can be safely made with the train and automobile traveling at a slow rate of speed. The cameraman turns his camera slowly on the scene and when it is projected on the screen, the train and automobile appear to be traveling at a dizzy rate of speed.

The unique "slow motion" photography, now often seen on the screen and which slows down the motion of a fast runner or an athletic game or other interesting action to about eight times less than its normal speed, is accomplished by this principle. The cameraman, with a special machine, turns his camera very rapidly, making so many exposures of the motion as to absorb more of the details of the motion and thus slowing down the action of the subject. On the other hand, pictures

have been made showing a flower grow to full size, bud, and blossom in a few moments, by the aid of stop-motion photography. This is because the camera is operated extremely slow, only one or two exposures being made per day, and at the end of several days, when the flower has matured and blossomed, only a few feet of film have passed through the camera, recording the entire action of the development of the plant.

The "fade-out" and "fade-in" are two common effects seen on the screen, made by devices on the modern camera. In the case of the fade-in, the figures in the scene slowly fade into view on a hitherto blank screen. This is done by a gradual admission of the light until the lens is fully open. The fade-out is a reverse process to the fade-in. These effects can also be obtained, when necessary, by the use of chemicals in the laboratory development process. In this case they are known as "chemical" fades.

The "iris" is a camera attachment which narrows down the area covered by the lens to a vanishing point in the center, or reversed, gradually opens up the area of the lens until the entire screen area is visible. The former effect is known as an "iris out," and the latter an "iris in."

"Reverse action" is made by running the film through the camera backwards while taking a scene. Thus, when the film is projected on the screen in the natural way, the last action of the players will be seen first and the first action of the players, last. This reverses their action.

Double and triple exposure are effects very often used in modern motion picture photography, especially in pictures where one star plays two roles and often seemingly converses and acts with himself in the same scene. This is done as follows: The cameraman blocks out one half of his lens, leaving the other half open. He then turns his camera and records the action of the player on one side of the film to which light is admitted by that part of the lens not covered. During this action he counts and identifies certain actions of the player by certain counts. At the finish of the scene, he then rewinds his film back into the unexposed magazine, and shifting the lens covering to the other side, rephotographs the player, in his other characterization on the other side of the film, making

his actions to match up, by the count, with the actions of the player on the side already photographed.

This principle of double exposure is also used in scenes where ghosts, spirits, visions or other symbols to show the vividness of the human imagination are shown. The scene is first photographed, the player or players acting just as if they were seeing the ghost or vision and their action timed by count. The film is then rewound and run through the camera again, this time with the figure portraying the ghost or vision in action. Because the film has already been exposed once, the figure on the second exposure will appear very light or transparent, as a ghost, and articles of furniture, etc., registered on the first exposure can be discerned through that player. The action of the ghost or vision is also synchronized to the action of the players in the first exposure by the cameraman's count.

Having discussed and explained briefly a few of the vital principles of the motion picture camera, let us consider the training of the men who are assigned to the important duty of operating the camera.

The majority of the chief cameramen, the heads of the camera departments in the various large studios, and the chief executives in that branch of the art, have instituted a very thorough and rigid course of training for the men who operate these machines, teaching them the profession from the beginning right in the studio. One head cameraman has developed something like thirty cameramen during his experience at a certain studio, starting them at the bottom of the ladder and training them in the fundamentals of photography, the chemical phases and the many incidental processes which are akin and subsidiary to the actual photography of the picture, and taking them step by step until they have reached the ultimate goal—the positions of head cameraman.

"In the first place," he explained, when interviewed upon the subject, "I always select from the applicants for this work, men who have studied chemistry in college or high school. This knowledge is necessary to their first work in the laboratory in the developing and printing of films, color work,

tinting, etc. The applicant is first employed in the studio laboratory until he learns this chemical phase of photography. He is then assigned to a first cameraman as assistant.

"His duties as assistant are to give the machine perfect, constant care, cleaning and overhauling it whenever necessary and to be of every possible assistance to his superior cameraman. In this way, he gains a thorough practical knowledge of the mechanical side of the work. After two or three years of this work he is generally in a position to be promoted to the post of second cameraman, whose work, under the supervision of the first cameraman, is largely of a mechanical nature, the first cameraman attending personally to the lightings, effects, etc., and assuming all responsibility for the second cameraman's work.

"After he has served in this capacity for about two years, if he be qualified for this line of work, he fills the first vacancy on the staff of head cameramen.

"It will be seen from this that about five years' continuous study and practice in the various phases of photography constitute the course of training through which the cameraman must pass before he is entrusted with the important responsibility of acting as head cameraman for a producing unit."

A full-fledged first cameraman must possess the following qualifications:

He must be able to deliver the goods—to go out and get what is assigned to him, regardless of cost, chances, danger or other impediments. Every cameraman is furnished with the best of equipment in the large studios, and no excuses for failure are accepted.

A cameraman does not have to be limited by any set equipment or paraphernalia. He builds up his own camera and is supplied with whatever equipment he desires, to get the best effects.

No matter what else is happening, the cameraman must always stick to his camera and keep the handle turning. This is one of the things upon which the greatest stress is brought to bear during his training. There are always others to take care of whatever else is necessary. The cameraman must be

a veritable mechanical part of his camera during the taking of a scene and he must get all the action, no matter if the scene develops by chance into a real tragedy or a grave accident.

The cameraman is also taught not to argue or disagree with his director, but rather, when possible, to co-operate perfectly with him and get everything he asks for. Absolute co-operation and harmony among the various branches of any industry always are conducive of the best results.

The cameraman must possess not only a mechanical knowledge of the camera and all the branches of photography, he must not only know how to handle the film from the moment it goes into the camera until it is ready to be projected upon the screen, taking it through all the various stages of development from the raw to the finished product, but he must possess an artistic talent.

Cinematography is not simply a mechanical trade which almost anyone so inclined can master. The cameraman must have individuality and certain characteristic ideas of expression, the same as the director and the actor. He must develop his own art and avail himself of his own talents. No two cameramen use entirely the same methods or shoot a scene in exactly the same way. To photograph a motion picture is not simply a matter of focussing a camera and turning the crank. A cameraman who is perfect in his mechanical work and who demonstrates no ideas or initiative of his own, will have to strive hard for success. Upon him rests a large part of the burden of proper lightings of the players and settings and the average director also depends upon his cameraman a great deal for aid in the composition or artistic arrangement of the photographic scene.

A knowledge of the camera and the artistic phase of photography in motion pictures, involves a study of the photographic values of colors, as many rich color schemes are used in settings and costumes for the players. Black, red, dark blue, purple, yellow, all photograph very dark, most of them black, as explained in a previous chapter. Pink, light blue, light yellow, lavender and other lighter shades all register white or very light grey. Greys and sepias are known as neutral shades and photograph grey. It has often been a

puzzle to the layman, perhaps, why the many rich color combinations are used in gowns, costumes and set decoration, if they are only to register on the screen as whites, greys and blacks. Alvin Wyckoff, one of the greatest camera experts, explains this by entering into the psychological phase of the camera artist's work.

"Costumes and settings," he explains, "are made up in colors, principally for the inspiration they afford the cameramen, directors and players. It is impossible to enter into the spirit of a scene unless one keenly feels the atmosphere which that scene is supposed to represent. An actor on an empty stage cannot give nearly the performance that he can render when the same stage is realistically set with the investiture and atmosphere of the scene in question. In the same way, the motion picture actor can do much better emotional work when music is provided him by some artist on the sidelines. It reaches his soul and his dramatic instincts are stirred and respond. Color values serve much the same purpose. They inspire not only the director and the actors, but also the cameraman and he can often hit upon certain lighting effects which the cold, unromantic blacks, greys and whites would not have suggested.

"Can you possibly imagine a little girl dressed for a party, feeling and reflecting the holiday spirit for a motion picture scene if dressed in a party dress of sombre grey or other blank color, with the same degree of enthusiasm as she would employ in expressing the same scene if dressed in a pretty frock of pink or lavender or baby blue?"

The photographic facilities of the model large studio are very complete. The Paramount west coast studio owns and operates twenty-six cameras, exclusive of the one already mentioned. These average an investment of from three to four thousand dollars each. There are also several still cameras, a portrait machine and a few kodaks and graflex cameras.

The studio maintains a staff of forty cameramen, comprised of nine first cameramen, eight second cameramen, twelve assistants and a few still photographers and special operators.

New experiments in photography and improvements are

constantly being made. One device that has come into general use during the past few years is the colored filter. These are thin pieces of transparent colored silk gauze which are fitted in front of the camera lens. Their purpose is to make photographic corrections—that is, to make a scene photograph exactly the same as it looks to the eye. For example, if one should photograph a sky scene through the straight camera lens, the sky, because of the light blue color and the strong actinic light value, would appear bleached and white on the film. But if the natural color of the sky is darkened a little by a colored filter over the lens, then the photographic result will be exactly the same shade as the eye picture.

A strict observance of his duty to stick to his camera, despite what may happen during the filming of a scene, often entails daring risks to the cameraman. In fire, water and other big scenes, the cameraman is often placed in the most dangerous position of all. And on many occasions, when shots were being made in which ferocious animals have been used, cameramen have shown unsurpassed bravery by sticking to their posts at times when the animals have shown signs of running amuck.

Alvin Wyckoff, the head cameraman mentioned above, relates an incident in the filming of an aeroplane scene in which an adherence to his training of sticking to his camera at all times proved his salvation.

"I had gone up in an aeroplane," he narrates, "to photograph the opening of the new Beverley Speedway at Beverley Hills, California, at the start of the first race to be held on the course. Before ascending, I had arranged with the pilot that I would make known my wishes to him while in the air, by means of a set of signals, it being impossible to converse over the roar of the motor. I instructed him that when I tapped him on the left shoulder, he was to descend and when I touched him on the right shoulder, that would be the signal to ascend higher. Finding it impossible to get my camera focussed directly on the spot which I desired to photograph, on account of the straps and the sides of the pit, I unstrapped myself and crawled out on the top of the plane. In getting out of the pit, with my back toward the pilot, my foot touched

him on the left shoulder. Immediately, he dropped and I lost my bearings altogether. The only thing that saved my life was my prompt action in throwing my arms around the camera and clinging for dear life, while my legs dangled in the air, a thousand feet from terra firma. The plane soon ceased its descent and I was able to crawl back into the pit."

Color photography, or the reproduction of motion pictures on the screen in their natural colors, is a very complicated process which is now and then applied in the making of certain scenes or titles in a motion picture, but is so involved that a long detailed, technical discussion would be necessary in order to properly present it and then it is doubtful if the principles of the process would be grasped by the layman. Such a discussion will therefore not be entered into here. Suffice it to say, however, that color photography, although perhaps it will never take the place entirely of straight photography, it is nevertheless now a perfected reality and will be valuable in future motion picture production in making special titles and in putting over certain impressive effects which would otherwise be impossible. Color photography involves the use of a special camera which exposes two different sets of negative film at the same time, each negative being sensitized to a different set of color light values, and which, when developed in the laboratory takes up the dye color preparations representing those values.



CHAPTER XVI

LIGHTINGS AND EFFECTS



NE of the most vital of all life-giving elements is light.

Life, action, realism, are the vital spark of the motion picture and correct lighting is one of the most active factors in the attainment of these qualities on the screen.

Old Sol, the main source of earthly light, however, has been cheated of part of his glory in the modern lighting systems now in use in the large motion picture producing plants. In the early days of the film industry, artificial lights were unheard of and the sun was the source of all photographic illumination. When rainy weather came along, however, there had to be a suspension of activities. It was impossible to get anything but flat, plain photography by the use of sunlight. Special effects were out of the question.

But after a while, as the art-industry progressed, audiences began to be critical of photographic lightings in screen productions and soon the lightings were given a prominent place in the reviews of critics. The importance of lightings and effects began to be realized when a few crude attempts were made to obtain unusual effects and add to the psychological value of certain scenes by variations of light. It was also discovered that the varying intensities of sunlight, during the day, would result in varying degrees of light tones in the completed film. This gave rise to a necessity for standardized or even lighting, which would be of an even tone throughout the picture, except where special effects were desired. The result is the elaborate lighting systems now in use in the modern studios. It is now possible to defy the sun, as it were—to shoot in rainy or

cloudy weather as well as on the brightest days. So practical and so efficient have become the systems of electrical illumination now in vogue that hardly an interior scene is made without the aid of these powerful illuminating agencies.

The systems of electrical studio illumination are conducted under the supervision of trained electrical engineers who have been famous for big achievements in this line of work.

For a detailed observance of one of the most practical and efficient systems of studio illumination now in use, let us again turn to our model studio which has provided much of the material for previous chapters and study its illumination facilities.

This studio is equipped with a mammoth electric plant and a complete, elaborate system of wiring for current distribution to points all over the four studio stages. The plant includes a big three-unit Westinghouse motor generator, another smaller generator set, a twenty-three hundred volt switchboard, and a new one hundred and ten volt low tension switchboard which will handle both alternating and direct current, distributing this current to any stage wall switch; a complete set of transformers and other electrical units and machinery. About twenty feet apart on each side of each of the four big stages are new special Kranz safety switch pockets. These connect by cables with portable switchboards, which stand on the set where scenes are being photographed, each of these portable switchboards being capable of accommodating a complete set of lights for illuminating purposes.

The studio electrical shop, another unit of the system, is maintained by a crew of efficient engineers, to keep all lamps repaired, overhauled and in splendid condition, thus avoiding poor lighting and hold-ups to directors, and to execute many new ideas and innovations constantly being introduced. The shop men built the new switchboard above referred to and have constructed many new designs in light equipment, which will be discussed in detail a little further on.

Portable generator plants, mounted on large trucks, supply the current for the illumination of scenes made at night on exterior location sites away from the studio. Three of these portable generator plants, also one set of transformers on a

trailer, are in constant use for night scenes on location, by this studio.

The various kinds of lamps in use in this system, include Klieglights, spotlights, Sun Arcs and big General Electric searchlights.

The prime, flat, illumination of the setting, sufficient for straight photographic purposes, is provided by a number of Klieglights, which are diffused with ribbed glass or semi-opaque curtains to break up the sharp beams and spread the light evenly over the area to be illuminated.

The spotlight, which is a small light with a single carbon arc and a condenser or bull's-eye, serves a number of important purposes. Some of these are placed up on top of the wall of the set and focussed on the heads of the principals, causing a sort of halo about their heads and features. This halo is practically invisible to the eye, but possesses a tremendous actinic or photographic value. In the eye of the camera, this additional lighting causes the character to stand out from the background and makes the photography more realistic. Without this lighting, the perspective would not be clearly enough defined and the figures would not be nearly so pronounced. This light is so regulated that it is not too strong, for if it throws too powerful a beam, it will form a visible halo about the head and face of the player, which is a very unsatisfactory effect, causing hilation.

The spotlight also serves the very important purpose of casting the invisible mantle over some of the photographic defects of some players, such as deep wrinkles, double chins, sagging or hollow cheeks and too deeply sunken eye sockets. These defects loom up much worse than they really are when the general illumination causes them to cast shadows, or they are not properly lighted. By the use of spotlights, placed either on the floor in front of the player, or one at each side, or in the most advantageous angle to light up the shadow in question, such defects can be largely counteracted.

The Sun Arc, which is a larger and much more powerful light than the Klieg or the spot, is used to illuminate large settings or for special sunlight or moonlight effects through windows or doors. For the latter purpose, this light must

be that much stronger than the general illumination provided by the Kliegs, that its beam will penetrate the flat quality of those lights, thus providing sunlight or moonlight effects.

The two big General Electric searchlights used at this studio—the most powerful ever conceived for studio illumination and the only two in existence, are used for illuminating still larger settings and also for special sunlight effects. These are so powerful that for general illumination they are usually focussed on a reflecting medium, which in turn throws the diffused rays down on to the setting, giving an even spread of light and avoiding the necessity of any of the players having to look into the strong beams with their eyes, which would result in injurious effects to the optics.

In all of these lamps, the carbon arc is the medium of light. This is formed by two carbons, the points of which are a small space apart—one containing a positive and the other a negative current. There is a strong spark between the two points, causing a brilliant light arc, strong in actinic value.

The carbon arc system is also employed in many illumination devices and properties. The cheerful fire which burns in the grate in a motion picture setting would be dull and colorless when photographed, were it not for the baby carbon arcs concealed behind the logs, which illumine the natural flames. The flames alone would photograph very dark and colorless without the aid of this artificial illumination.

A close-up inspection of the big stand lamp in the library or drawing room setting discloses not an incandescent lamp bulb but a baby carbon arc underneath the shade. If the room were really dark, the incandescent lamp would cast sufficient light to register photographically, but it must be remembered that a setting is already lighted up from the outside by Klieglights and the light from the lamp must be stronger than the flat tone of light already flooding the room, before it will register. In a lighted setting, an incandescent lamp would photograph black instead of light, because its lighting capacity is less than the value of the light which pervades the entire room.

The old fashioned oil lamp which is seen in settings representing country homes, the westerner's shack or in any

home during that period of time before the invention of the incandescent light, is also fitted up with a baby carbon arc, replacing the yellow oil flame from the wick, which flame would have no photographic value whatsoever.

In the same way, the burglar's flashlight and all other properties are equipped. When the screen actor is seen to light his cigarette in a dark room, giving a very unique lighting effect as the glow of light illumines his face, it is not the match he has struck, but the tiny carbon arc, concealed in his palm and connected by a wire running down his sleeve, which cause that glow.

The studio electrical operator, like the cameraman, must be an artist as well as an engineer or mechanic. After he has technically mastered his profession, he must then learn the art of illumination—one of the major arts in film production because of its relationship to good photography.

It has perhaps occurred to very few théâtre patrons that a studio electrician must first make a study of the types he is to light before knowing just what kind and how many lights he is to use and to what degree they are to be regulated. Hardly any two stars require exactly the same quality of lighting. A blonde does not require nearly so intense a beam as a brunette and a lighting arrangement which would exactly suit one would be very poor illumination for the other. Lightings are also regulated by the quality of make-up used. A brunette with a dark make-up must have strong light values to bring out her complexion and her hair. A blonde must have a weaker lighting because the strong light would "burn up" her complexion, or render it very pale and colorless. It will be seen from this that when the electrician has a scene in which a blonde and brunette work together, he has a problem in illumination which taxes his knowledge of the artistic side of lighting. The lights must be so regulated that they are neither too weak for the one nor too strong for the other. A happy medium must be struck. Another problem often encountered is the actress with fair skin and very black hair. A lighting arrangement strong enough for her hair is too strong for her complexion and a light properly suited to her complexion is not strong enough to bring out her hair. These problems

have to be carefully worked out. The electrician, like the director, the cameraman, the scenario writer and other members of a production staff, must exercise his own individuality in his work and possess a complete understanding of the artistic as well as the mechanical phase of his profession.

Exemplary of present day efficiency and perfection in electrical illumination, let us review some of the big electrical accomplishments in connection with latter-day film production.

One of the most notable lighting achievements ever consummated was the night lighting of a big Siamese exterior setting which was built at Balboa, California, for a spectacular sequence in a photoplay. The lighting equipment required to properly illuminate this set, if strung out in a continuous line would cover a quarter of a mile linear space. A high tension transmission line carrying current for a number of miles from a power station to the site, was set up. Arrangements were made with the power company to set up a special transformer. The shots were so long—that is, the distance from the camera to the scene, so far—in many instances, that the director had to use telephone equipment with amplifiers in giving orders to his players.

Another big project was the lighting of a setting representing a complete main street in a mining town. To properly light the town necessitated five big portable power plants. All the big Sun Arcs and General Electric searchlights in the studio and a large battery of Klieglights were transported to the setting and pressed into service. A carbon arc light was placed behind each window and door in the town to show signs of night life and activity.

Constant improvements and devices are being introduced in the studios, marking the advance in the motion picture illumination art. Skilled studio illuminating engineers devote much time to research and experiments. Within a few months, several such developments and improvements have been made and put into practical use, resulting in better effects and advancing the art to a higher plane. A few of such improvements and innovations, noted in our model studio, heretofore referred to, are herewith presented:

A special shutter, designed and made in the studio shop

built to fit all kinds of lamps, by means of which the light may be dimmed or brightened at will. The device consists of a number of vanes, controlled by one lever and makes it unnecessary to cut down the current when a dimmer light value is wanted. Such cutting down of the current has always been very unsatisfactory because it has always resulted in a flickering and jumping of the lights and consequent faulty photography. The shadows from the vanes are absorbed by diffusing curtains in front of the light.

The removal of the switchboxes from the spotlight standards or supporting stems and the replacing of those boxes on the head of the spotlight. This makes it possible for the electrician who sits up on top of the wall of a set with a spotlight, to turn the light off and on by the switch, whereas before, it was necessary to have another man down below to turn the light off because the switch was down below on the standard.

The lighting of colorful props, such as a vase of roses or a silk plaque or tapestry on the wall of a set. Under ordinary illumination, the vase of roses is just a mere prop, colorless, devoid of any special beauty or significance. But now, it has been discovered, that to put a spotlight on that vase of roses is to make it play a real, beautiful, artistic part in the picture. It is a colorful, living, attractive part of the scene which flashes on the silversheet.

A new scheme for exterior door and window lighting in a big night scene. The carbon arc lights generally placed behind the doors and windows of buildings in such a large exterior can now be dispensed with. The windows can be coated with an aluminum or silver paint which acts as a reflecting surface for the light beams cast from the outside by the big searchlights and gives the appearance of light in the windows, without the use of interior lamps. The part of the window supposedly covered by curtains, shutting out the light from within, is painted brown, which gives the effect of partly drawn curtains.

The old system of taking big night scenes in the daytime and tinting the film blue to fool the public into believing the scenes to have been taken at night, has been practically abandoned at this studio. All night scenes, no matter how

extensive the scope of operations, as in the case of the two projects referred to, are now made at night and the proper atmosphere is thus secured. But this means many tremendous tasks for the illuminating engineering department.

One of the most valuable innovations introduced recently at this studio and one which marks a new advanced step in motion picture illumination, is a large overhead half-spherical dome lamp by means of which indirect lighting from carbon arcs is supplied the scene below. The carbon arcs, hidden from view below by means of a trough in which they lie, are reflected by the upper concave surface of the dome to the region below. This cuts out all direct rays and gives an even, perfectly distributed light, which does not cast shadows. It is only direct rays which cast shadows. Then, for the special effects desired, spotlights can be used.

This indirect lighting or diffused illumination is the nearest approach to perfect natural light, taking as a basis for such perfect natural light, a north sky at noon on a cloudy day. This is known as one hundred per cent or perfect illumination, free from shadow. Draughtsmen and architects always work on their plans and drawings from light from a north sky because of the smooth, clear value of this light, which casts no shadows from their pencils, scales and other mechanical instruments. Indirect light, such as emanates from the lamp above described, does away with ugly shadows caused on the face by the features of the players, such as noses, eye sockets, protruding eyebrows, neck lines, double chins, etc.

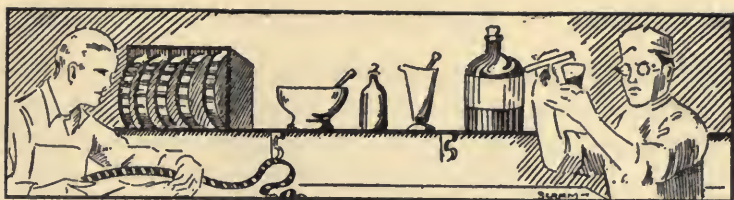
Another new lighting device, conceived and made up at the studio, is a long floor light, also an indirect light device, which is similar to and serves the same purpose as the stage footlights. The light is reflected up into the faces of the players from below and also serves to prevent facial shadows from the causes just mentioned. The lamp is a long tin trough fitted with a series of carbon arcs at equal distances apart.

Some facts and figures in regard to the cost and material involved in the new wiring of this particular studio and the improvements noted, might be of interest. Something like a hundred thousand dollars was invested in putting in the new system of wiring and making the improvements. Four car-

loads of five hundred circular mill copper wire cable were used in the new wiring and several carloads of three-inch galvanized iron conduit. The work covered about a year. The new wiring system and plant equipment, increased the current capacity of the plant for illumination, by five hundred per cent or five fold.

With the present high standard of equipment and organization in the electrical illumination department, the highest efficiency is possible. The department is sometimes given only eight or ten hours' notice to prepare and completely equip a large setting with artificial lighting facilities sufficient in power to light a small sized town. Illustrative of the magnitude of the work of preparing and lighting such a setting is the fact that the salaries of the men employed to operate the lights on one particular set, for three or four hours' work, amounted to between four and five hundred dollars.

Many problems have to be met and successfully overcome by the illuminating department. A single instance is when a certain director went to Jamestown, a small town in Northern California, to film village scenes. A transmission line was built from the power plant and equipment was shipped up for lighting the night scenes. It was found, however, that the local moving picture theatre consumed so much current that not enough was left to supply all the lights to light the setting. The electrician suggested that the director buy out the moving picture house for four nights. This was done. By keeping the local house dark during that time, the current ordinarily used for the theatre projection machines was left intact, which made sufficient voltage for the proper lighting of the large scene.



CHAPTER XVII

THE FILM LABORATORY



HAT is the next step in the treatment of motion picture film after it passes through the motion picture camera, with an exposed record of the scenes filmed during the day?

This is a question which very few could thoroughly answer, because the laboratory, the last great department of studio production, is a place to which very few outsiders are admitted. The average studio visitor never gets a glimpse into this complex and highly interesting department, but it shall not escape us in our journey from Pen to Silver-sheet.

The necessity for absolute perfection of organization and efficiency in the various phases of laboratory work can be readily realized by a consideration of the following proposition:

After all the expense and work and genius involved in the making of a motion picture, the only thing that a film company has to sell is a series of little pictures on a strip of film. If the laboratory is inefficient in its final treatment of this film, then the work of all other departments is injured and if the laboratory workers, through accident or mistake should destroy the precious celluloid, then all the efforts of all other departments, all the time and money involved, have been for naught and nothing remains to show for such expense of time, genius and money.

In describing the modern motion picture laboratory, its operations, the various processes which the film undergoes therein, we shall take the laboratory of our model studio—the Paramount West Coast plant, as an example. This important department is housed in a large concrete, fire-proof

building consisting of many rooms and branches and several vaults in which the film is stored. It is operated continuously, day and night, three hundred and sixty-five days in the year and two distinct shifts are kept constantly employed.

Before we proceed further, an explanation of the two kinds of film used in motion picture photography is essential. These two types are negative film and positive film. Negative film is the kind that is run through the motion picture camera and corresponds to the photographer's plate or the kodak film in still photography. Positive film is the type that is run through the projection machine, magnified and reflected on the screen in the theatre, and corresponds to the finished paper print in still photography, except that in this case, the print is transparent, so that the light may reflect the figures thereon onto the screen, in magnified form.

The negative, after being exposed by the cameraman, through his camera, is developed in the laboratory and from this finished negative the positive is printed by being placed in direct contact with the negative and exposed to strong light, and afterwards developed and fixed in chemical solutions. Any number of positive prints can be struck from this basic negative film, which is the only record of the picture and is carefully guarded and preserved. Two negatives are made of every scene and one fully assembled negative is shipped away for the foreign market, the other being retained for the American market.

The average output of this laboratory is eight hundred seventy-five thousand feet of positive film a week and from fifteen to twenty-five thousand feet of negative film each day. The negative film is sent into the laboratory by the cameraman at intervals during the day. Every time he has used up a four hundred foot roll of film he sends it in to the laboratory for development and printing and at the end of the day's work, the directors, cameramen and players assemble in the projection room in a corner of the building, one unit at a time, and look at a sample positive print of the day's takes. The negative, if ok'd by the director, is then stored in a vault reserved for that particular picture.

The negative rolls may be identified at any time by a key plate, containing the numbers of the scenes, the number of the picture, the name of the director and the color which the positive is to be tinted, which key plate is photographed on to the finish of each scene filmed during the day. After the sample positive film has all been assembled or patched together in proper scene order into one long strip, cut down to footage and is in its final, perfect state, the negative is cut in like manner, using this sample print as a guide model. Then, from this completed, assembled negative strip, the many positive prints needed for general distribution throughout the country, are struck.

The key numbers on the negative are also printed right on to each roll of positive film in the earlier stages of preparation and identify the positive and enable the director in assembling the various short scenes into one, continuous, coherent strip, which constitutes the picture.

The first process in the treatment of raw film, is the perforation. Anyone who has ever seen a piece of film has noticed the little sprocket holes along each outer edge of the strip. These sprocket holes are necessary to hold the film in place as it runs through the camera and later through the projection machine. The raw film enters the laboratory without these perforations and is run through a very delicate and intricate machine which makes the perforations. This machine has to be very exact and accurate because if the sprocket holes are not absolutely perfect and evenly cut, the film will be thrown out of frame in the camera and projection machine. The most skilled tool and die makers in the country are engaged to make and fit the tiny punches of this machine. There are four holes or perforations on each side of the film to each picture and sixteen pictures to each foot of film.

The positive is printed from the negative by running the exposed, developed negative film, in contact with a strip of unexposed positive film, through a printing machine which exposes each little picture, times it perfectly and sends it on through. The exposed positive is then taken to the positive dark room and wound on racks of two hundred feet capacity.

These racks with the film, are submerged first in a solution of developer, then washed, then in a solution of hypo or fixing bath, then washed again for a half hour in running water. It is then tinted with the appropriate color called for on the key at the end of each scene.

These tints are highly effective in accentuating effects. For instance, if it is a night shot, the scene is tinted dark blue, if a late afternoon sunset shot, the scene is tinted amber, if the scene shows a fire, the film is tinted red. This enhances the general effect. Several other colors or tints are used for various effects.

After tinting, the film is taken into the drying room and wound on large drying drums. These are then revolved until the film is entirely dry. A half hour is the average time consumed in the drying process. The film is then wound into rolls and taken into the assembling room where it is assembled into reels, then highly polished. After this it is projected on a tiny screen by a girl operator, who inspects the magnified print carefully, marking all flaws, scratches, cloudy or foggy pictures, etc. Many of these flaws would not be observed on the film itself, but as magnified on the projection screen they are easily detected. Another girl operator then goes over the film, takes out the marked scenes and substitutes fresh prints which have subsequently been struck from the negative. The film is then repolished, when it is ready to be packed and shipped.

Two hours is the average time consumed to put a roll of film through the laboratory processes and deliver it to the director for projection, but in an emergency, the film can be rushed through in an hour, thanks to the clock-work organization of the department.

An average of a hundred and fifty men and girls are employed in this one studio department.

Every positive print for every completed picture is turned out in this laboratory. This means that hundreds of thousands of feet of film must be handled on each picture produced.

This complex department represents an investment of three hundred thousand dollars. The majority of the men and girls employed in the laboratory are trained right in the plant, com-

ing in as raw recruits. Most of them, however, have had college or high school training in chemistry, this being necessary as laboratory work involves an intimate working knowledge of several important chemical processes used in the development and printing of the film.



CHAPTER XVIII

TITLING AND EDITING



OTION picture sub-titles serve several very important purposes. They establish the time and locale of the story, plant the theme, introduce the characters, bridge the temporal gaps in the action of the picture and explain certain technicalities in the story which would be either very difficult to get over by action or would require an undue amount of film footage.

In addition to playing this very necessary part in the picture, the sub-titles contribute materially to the entertainment, if cleverly and properly worded. A good title, now and then, is a dash of spice to the picture and serves to break the pictorial sameness. The spoken title also helps to establish the personalities and temperaments of the characters, if worded in the proper dialect or phraseology typical to that character and expressing his sentiments in relation to the story. There have been numerous instances, especially in the case of film comedies, where a good set of titles have been known to strengthen materially what would otherwise have been a very poor picture.

In large studios, where production is carried on on a big scale, the procedure leading up to the titling of the picture is something like this:

After the scenes are all photographed and the laboratory has finished a complete set of positive prints of all scenes, as described in the chapter just previous, the director assembles the scenes into a continuous, perfect sequence and cuts it down by trimming out superfluous footage, to about five or six reels, providing the picture is to consist of five reels.

The scenario writer's guide titles, as they appeared in his

script, are then typed, photographed on to film and the filmed titles inserted into their proper places in the assembled picture. The picture, in this rough state, is then turned over to the title writers and editorial department for a complete set of new improved titles and the final editing and cutting down to footage.

The titles in an average five-reel feature will require anywhere from a thousand to fifteen hundred feet of film. This means that the picture proper must be cut down to about thirty-five hundred feet of film. Thus, the editorial department must do a great deal of trimming on the rough, assembled picture as turned over to it by the director.

The method in vogue in titling and final editing of the pictures at the large model studio, is as follows:

The title and editorial crew and a supervising director, view this assembled picture in the projection room and then go into conference with the scenarist's titles as a guide sheet. In writing a set of titles for the picture, the title writers strive for brevity and clarity, perfect grammatical construction, perfect English and in the case of spoken titles—to make them conform to the character of the person doing the speaking. For instance, if a French-Canadian character was doing the speaking of the title, they would have him talk in the dialect peculiar to that race, or if the character were an underworld type, he would use the appropriate slang. This makes his portrayal stronger and more impressive upon the audience, stamping his character in their minds.

In titling comedies, the general policy is that every title must provoke a laugh, even though it be purely descriptive. This carries out the general plan of the picture. If the action is funny and the titles serious, there is a lack of harmony.

An effort is made to give the titles literary and entertaining value in addition to making them serve their necessary purpose in the picture.

A title without a punch is more or less a hold-up in the action. In drama, the titles must have dramatic strength as well as serving to clarify the scene in the minds of the spectators.

In the title conference, the picture is reviewed from the

beginning and suggestions are made by the title writers. These suggestions are discussed pro and con and one is decided upon for each title. After a complete set of titles have been evolved, these are typed, photographed and inserted into the picture in lieu of the scenario writer's original titles. In some cases, some of the scenarist's titles are retained, if they are considered better than any of the new suggestions. All of the editorial staff try to work with the spirit of co-operation, for the betterment and in the interest of the picture.

The picture, containing this new set of titles, which are called "temporary titles" or "temps," is again reviewed in the projection room by the title and editorial staff, who are thus able to judge them on the screen and see that they fit perfectly with the action or dialogue. Changes are then often made again and all are made to fit perfectly. For instance, if a character speaks on the screen and the corresponding spoken title doesn't seem to synchronize exactly with his gestures and expressions, the title is changed so that it does. This is a sort of literary smoothing-out process.

All superfluous action and slowing-down action is trimmed from the picture in this editorial treatment.

In cutting-in spoken titles, the title begins right where the character starts to speak and when the title finishes the character is shown just completing his speech. If the character were allowed to speak in the scene and the title were then flashed on, that would be a repetition of action and speech and would slow down the picture.

After the temporary titles or "temps" are all perfected and ok'd by the supervising director, a title sheet is then turned over to the art and title printing department for illustration and printing. The editorial staff get up ideas for illustrations and the title artists execute them on black title backgrounds. The title is then printed on the illustrated board and the whole is then photographed to proper footage—allowing three feet of film to every five words of title. These permanent titles are then cut into the sample edited picture and after it is reviewed again and perhaps more minor cuts and changes made, it is then in its perfect, completed state and

all ready to be turned over to the laboratory for negative cutting.

In devising illustrations for title backgrounds, the title writers try to hit upon a certain illustrative theme or series of symbols which will conform to the idea of the picture, and carry that theme all the way through the picture in the title illustrations. For instance, in a picture in which the main motive of the hero was matrimony, cupids were the principal illustrative theme.

Simplicity in illustration is of prime importance. If the background is too involved or too elaborate, the eye is distracted from the printed title and the spectator often fails to read the title, taking up the time in contemplating the illustration.

In the average five-reel picture, there are about a hundred and fifty or a hundred and sixty titles—or about thirty to a reel. This, of course, varies. The title staff generally takes about a week to title one picture. At the studio in question, there are four title writers, working in crews of two each.

A discussion of the main title of the motion picture is here apropos. The naming or titling of each new film production is one of the most important, momentous tasks of the scenario department.

We can all remember, how as school children, we were instructed by the teacher to write our compositions before titling them. In the same way, a motion picture is titled after it is produced, or after it is well under way, except in the case of pictures based on noted stories, plays or novels, and even in such cases, the title is often changed for the picture.

The greatest importance of a title lies, perhaps, in its box office and artistic value. It is true that a good picture with a poor title may lose much of the success which it should rightfully achieve, and thus lose dollars for the exhibitor. It is not true that a poor picture with a sensational, powerful title, will be altogether successful. The title might draw the crowds on the first showing, but the ensuing comment on the picture will destroy the glamour of the title.

A good main title must allure or attract. It must suggest. The exhibitor considers the "pulling in" or attracting power

of a main title as one of the greatest assets of the picture, provided the picture be proportionately good. A title must have this box office value. At the same time, the artistic value of the title must be considered. There is the danger of making it too sensational, or out of harmony with the picture, if the box office idea is too strongly carried out.

A good title must also be a collection of words that are easily remembered. Then if persons in the audience enjoy the picture, they can go home and tell their friends about it. If they cannot recall the title, however, their friends will not be nearly so much impressed with their recital of the merits of the picture and will have no name by which to identify it in their minds. To be easily remembered, a title should be, if possible, euphonious in sound, easy to say and composed of as few words as possible. It should be witty or catchy, both in sound and sentiment. Simplicity is one of the chief requisities, but at the same time, the title, though short and simple, should not be flat and meaningless. Caution is exercised to strike the happy medium between these two extremes.

A main title should have advertising or publicity value. It should afford opportunity for pictorial suggestions and illustrations, so that it may be advertised in an impressive manner for and by the exhibitor.

A main title must not tell too much. It must suggest the story or plot or theme without telling it conclusively. That destroys suspense. It must merely make a suggestion which arouses curiosity. To illustrate, let us suppose that Miss Brown marries, at the very finish of the picture, a man called Mr. Smith. "The Romantic Mrs. Smith" would be a very poor title for that picture, for it would tell the audience at the start of the picture that the girl is going to marry Smith, thus killing the love interest and romantic suspense. A better title, to use a contrasting illustration, would be, "The Romantic Miss Brown." This would imply romance without telling the audience beyond a doubt that Miss Brown does marry Smith.

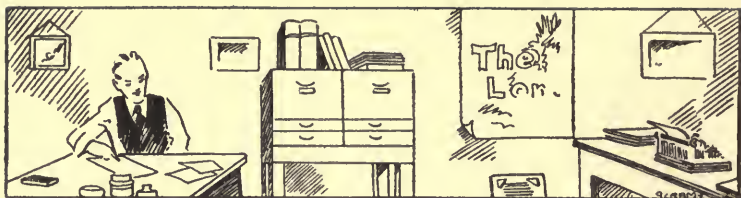
Another example of the title that tells too much is the good old melodrama title, "She Sinned But Was Forgiven." This lays bare the entire plot of the story.

Some of the best main titles which ever graced the silver-

sheet did not have to be searched for or pondered over at all. Often the star or one of the players will speak a line extemporaneously, during a scene in the picture, which will either serve as a title or suggest a thought from which an excellent title will spring.

It might be of interest to note that light comedies are easier to supply with main titles than dramas. In the drama, there is more plot to suggest—the title must be strictly dramatic. Wit and humor go hand in hand and it is therefore easy to get a good, witty, snappy title for a humorous picture. Also there are many idiomatic and semi-slang expressions in vogue at this period, all of which make good light comedy main titles. Such phrases as "Watch Your Step," "Sick Abed," "The Poor Boob," "Going Some," "Nobody Home," etc., have been used as titles for stage and screen light comedy productions.

The working title of a picture is only a temporary makeshift by which it may be identified while it is in the making and until a permanent title is evolved. Sometimes the picture is designated merely by a number until it is completed, when a main title is chosen.



CHAPTER XIX

STUDIO EXPLOITATION



ELL the world about it!

That is the purpose and the function of those who are concerned with the important work of exploitation of motion pictures.

There are three great heads or subdivisions under which all the activities of the film industry might be segregated. These are (1) Production, (2) Exploitation and (3) Distribution. A fourth—Presentation—might be added, this being the exhibition of the picture in the theatre or its presentation to the film public.

It is with the second great branch of activity—exploitation—that this chapter is concerned.

The value of a product of any nature whatsoever is gauged solely by the interest aroused in that product and the number of consumers who, being so interested, are influenced to the state where they desire that product. Any product, whatever its merit, is valueless unless it can be marketed—valueless both to the one who produces it and the one for whose consumption it is intended.

This, in brief, is the why and wherefore for the existence of this great department or branch of the motion picture industry—Exploitation.

Exploitation is a general term and in this instance involves two courses of procedure. These are publicity and advertising. Publicity is a recital of facts presented to the public through printed mediums or by word of mouth, as news and because of its news value and the public interest in the subject, commands space in newspapers, magazines, journals or other printed matter, without charge being made for such space.

Advertising is space in such printed organs, purchased by a concern and used as that concern shall dictate, in exploiting its product.

The avenues of publicity and advertising for motion pictures, are newspapers, "fan" or motion picture magazines, technical magazines, periodicals, etc. In these avenues, the publicity is directed to the ultimate consumer, the film patron. Then there are a large number of trade journals, published for the theatre owner or exhibitor and containing news of interest to him about motion pictures. The publicity and advertising placed in these journals is generally directed to the exhibitor and written with a view to his interest in the product.

In every film studio, there is an institution known as the publicity department. This department is generally well organized and is considered one of the most important studio centres. The publicity department at the large model studio which we have discussed throughout this book, is composed of a director of publicity, six staff writers, one publicity photographer, two stenographers and three laboratory experts and occupies a suite of five offices and a completely equipped laboratory for the developing, printing and enlarging of still photographs. The staff men are all trained writers, the majority of them having had several years newspaper or magazine experience.

The interest of the film patron is aroused by telling him, through publicity; first, of the forthcoming picture, its interesting features, its story, its dramatic high lights, incidents and happenings of interest during its production, and second, by keeping him informed, through publicity channels mentioned above, of the stars, principals and leading players—their characteristics, personalities, their views on certain subjects and interesting events in their daily lives, both professional and domestic. This makes the name and personality of the star familiar to the theatre patron and helps to make them acquainted and bring them together as it were, and the better acquainted a patron is with a star, the more interest he will evidence in his work in the pictures.

The matter turned out by the publicity department consists of the following:

(1) Press books, or pamphlets describing in detail each picture, its players and all its points of interest. These are intended for the exhibitor, who gets a copy when he rents the film and is thus provided with all necessary information about the picture and with stories for his local newspapers and concrete ideas with which to exploit the picture in his city. The press book also contains pictures of all advertising cuts, mats, posters and other advertising accessories which have been made up on the picture and are obtainable at the exchange.

(2) Magazine stories about the stars, principals and leading players, to be placed in what are known as fan magazines, such as "Photoplay," "Picture-Play," "Screenland," "Motion Picture," "Motion Picture Classic," "Filmplay," "Shadowland," etc. Larger magazines of this type also maintain their own correspondents who get their material through co-operation with the publicity department and are shown every courtesy by that department.

(3) Stories about various technical phases of film production, such as electrical illumination, camera, sculpture, properties, make-up, scientific, etc., intended for magazines devoted to these various arts and crafts.

(4) Full page newspaper supplement feature stories with picture layouts. Most of the large papers also have their own feature writers who obtain material direct through the publicity department.

(5) Short news stories of every kind, intended for newspapers, magazines, exhibitors' trade journals and concerning activities of players, officials, etc., and other items of interest emanating from a motion picture studio.

(6) Publicity pictures of all kinds, showing players in informal poses about the studio and linking up with the picture in which they are appearing, whenever possible.

(7) Portraits of stars and players.

(8) Specially posed still pictures for each production, showing principals posed to illustrate most important situations of story—these to be used for lithographs, advertising cuts and lobby displays.

This publicity material is forwarded by the studio depart-

ment to a central or home office, generally in New York, the executive center of the corporation, where it is prepared in large quantities and given general circulation by a large staff of experts trained in the placing and distribution of such publicity. In this office the advertising on all current pictures is also prepared and distributed, the lithographs, cuts, press books and other accessories are prepared and sent to the various exchanges where they may be obtained by exhibitors.

In some smaller, independent producing units, the studio publicity department does its own publicity distribution.



CHAPTER XX

DISTRIBUTION

NOW that our picture is made, advertised and exploited and shipped, we arrive at the last stage through which it must pass before it is finally flashed on the screen—the distribution and sale of the picture.

For the distribution of motion picture films, some very elaborate and thorough systems have been worked out. In the case of organized distributing companies, a chain of exchanges are established and maintained. There is one exchange or branch distributing center in each big key city of the United States and each one of these exchanges governs a certain district or zone of sales territory. Where the population is congested, this district will cover perhaps only a few square miles, but in other sections less densely populated, the district often will comprise an entire state, or sections of two or three states. The Los Angeles exchange for Paramount Pictures, for instance, is the central sales office for Southern California, all of Arizona and a part of New Mexico and Nevada, while in New York there are three exchanges for the one state.

As a representative example of the best systems of distribution, the methods in vogue at this exchange will be described. There is one official at the head of the entire distribution system in the home office, in New York, known as the general manager of distribution. Then there are district managers over each of several districts, each of which comprises several exchanges. For instance, one district manager has jurisdiction over the Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and Los Angeles exchanges. Over each exchange there is a manager.

A number of salesmen work out of each exchange and con-

tract with exhibitors for showings of pictures. Other members of the personnel of an exchange are the booker, the auditor, the accessories salesman and the exploitation agent, whose work is a service to the theatre owner or exhibitor, providing him with suggestions for advertising and exploiting his picture and co-operating with him in every way in the execution of such exploitation ideas.

The film, encased in a regulation galvanized iron container, the specifications of which were provided for in a ruling of the Interstate Commerce Commission, is sent direct from the laboratory at the studio, following final inspection, to the exchange. The exchange generally receives five or six prints of each picture. At the exchange, the film is re-inspected and run through a preparation of cocoa butter and paraffin to protect the emulsion from the intense heat of the projection machine and prevent possible scratches on the film.

To protect the exhibitor showing first-run features, the exchange will not permit a second showing in the same city, of such features, until periods ranging from thirty to sixty days from the date of showing, have elapsed. Thus, a feature production which shows at Los Angeles' largest theatre on July 1st, cannot be shown again in the city of Los Angeles earlier than August 1st. After the second run in a smaller downtown theatre, the picture can be booked immediately for suburban houses or other smaller downtown houses. Two suburban exhibitors in the same city can show the picture simultaneously, provided they are in widely separated sections. In small towns, one brand of pictures is often sold to only one exhibitor, thus giving him the exclusive agency for that brand of product in his particular town.

The life of the average picture often runs into years, as it goes down the line from the larger houses to the smaller, is booked for re-showings, etc. "The Miracle Man," one of the most successful pictures ever produced, is already nearly four years old and is still going strong.

The rental price of a picture to an exhibitor is set after a careful consideration of several conditions. These are the film population of the city, the merit or box office value of the picture, the class of the theatre, whether a first run, second run,

suburban or small town house, etc. The first run theatre in a large city, with a good attendance is charged a top rental price, while for the same picture, the rental price to the second run exhibitor, the suburban exhibitor, the small town exhibitor or even to the first-run exhibitor in a town of smaller film population or poorer attendance record, is much lower. In this matter, all the facts are carefully weighed and the utmost spirit of fairness to the exhibitor is maintained.

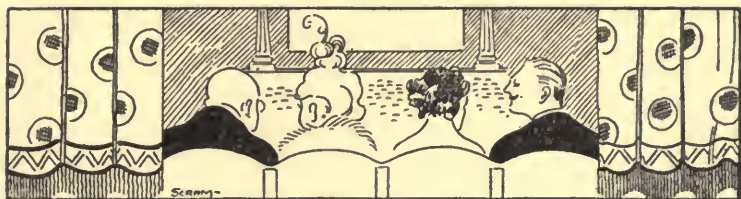
All the business of the exchange is conducted on a strictly cash basis. The exhibitor generally puts up a rental deposit on contract and receives the picture C.O.D. When the picture is sent to an out-of-town exhibitor, the responsibility of packing up the picture and sending it on to the next exhibitor who has contracted for it, is his.

Films are usually shipped to exhibitors by express or parcels post, but even aeroplanes have sometimes been used in case of rush shipments.

The accessories department sends to the exhibitor his standing order on each picture, for posters, slides, heralds and advertising cuts.

The salesmen are assigned to zones which comprise the territory. Ofttimes one salesman will be assigned to a zone that is four or five hundred miles long, in which case he covers his territory about once every six weeks, making short jumps here and there until the entire zone is completed. The salesman sells as many productions to each theatre exhibitor as possible and by arranging with the booker, books exact play dates on a number of attractions at the time the contract for service is signed.

To prevent duplication and clashings in dates, all salesmen's contracts are subject to the o.k. of the manager and if of considerable size, to the final o.k. of the parent office.



CHAPTER XXI

THEATRE PRESENTATION

THE presentation of the motion picture, or its exhibition in the theatre, like the other great branches of the industry—production, exploitation and distribution—has progressed and advanced until it is now a great and distinct art and the greater geniuses of that field take their places in public recognition along with the great producers, players and leaders in other phases of the film industry.

A few years ago, in the days of the old Nickelodeon or nickel admission houses, the presentation of a picture was a very simple and crude proceeding and consisted merely in running the one, two or four reels of film through the projection machine and projecting it on to a screen. The only other factors in the presentation consisted in a few advertising slides, a kinetoscopic request that "Ladies will please remove their Hats," perhaps followed by a few sharp screen admonitions to some stubborn member of the feminine audience who refused to abide by the request; another slide announcing the next week's bill and a speiler or ballyhoo man outside the theatre who proclaimed in typical side-show lingo to passers-by the merits and sensational features of the pictures to be seen inside.

A little later, the illustrated song feature was introduced, consisting of a singer who sung some popular ballad from the stage, which was illustrated by appropriate slides and then little novelty acts in connection with the picture began to come into vogue.

Today, however, the wide-awake exhibitor must be an able showman and must plan the presentation of his picture with

the same pains and study and skill that a stage director plans the presentation of a big legitimate production. Many of these elaborate presentations are written up by trade journals to serve as guides and furnish valuable ideas for smaller exhibitors who later receive the picture for exhibition.

The leading film showmen of today often plan and rehearse for two or three weeks in advance, a coming program. Their motto is, "Give the people a good show," not depending too much upon the picture or the stars in the picture. If improperly presented and not accompanied by the right kind of features, the best picture in the world will fail to make the impression it deserves and satisfy the audience of today.

The principal features in a model presentation of today are the music, the effects, the scenic prologue and the exploitation. Many exhibitors firmly believe that fifty per cent of the picture depends upon the musical accompaniment.

With the arrival of the film in the theatre from the exchange, the up-to-date exhibitor takes it to his small, private projection room in the theatre and there projects it, with himself, his orchestra leader, a stenographer and his publicity department as the audience. During this private showing, ideas for prologues are suggested and discussed, the publicity department takes note of all advertising possibilities and the orchestra leader determines musical selections which will best accompany the photoplay, scene for scene or sequence for sequence, dictating to his stenographer these various selections and the cues in the picture by which they are to be played.

Thus, the orchestra leader must have a broad knowledge of music in order to be able to select compositions which will best synchronize with certain scenes as they are flashed on the screen at the rate of a foot a second.

Following this preview, the orchestra leader lays out a complete musical score for himself and orchestra, synchronizes it exactly to the picture and quite frequently writes a little special music to complete the score. Synchronizing music to photoplay action is perhaps the most important part of the photoplay presentation and the fact that unusual skill is required of an orchestra leader in this work, is responsible for the presence today of some of the best musicians in the country

in the motion picture theatres and the size of the salaries paid those musicians for such work.

The theatre manager studies his photoplay for a scenic prologue to precede the actual screening of the photoplay or to be interpolated in some climax during the screening. A most novel example of this was provided by a noted Los Angeles exhibitor, during his presentation of a certain film production some time ago. At the most critical and intensely dramatic point in the story, the picture faded, the curtain rose quickly and on the stage was an exact duplicate of the setting, characters and effects of the scene. The characters enacted the dramatic action and when the climax was over, the stage darkened, the curtain lowered and the picture went on from the point where the prologue finished.

An example of an effective prologue preceding the picture was seen when this same exhibitor showed another successful production wherein some of the principal scenes were enacted in a Parisian cafe. This cafe scene was exactly reproduced on the theatre stage, characters and all, and some of the action of the picture and many additional novelty acts were staged, including the Apache and other dance novelties.

In other presentations, the prologue consists of a suggestion of the theme of the play, in a setting similar to the one seen in the picture, with operatic and other musical novelties not necessarily connected with the story.

It is not unusual that the prologue for a photoplay is more expensive than the rental of the film play itself and oftentimes more people participate in the prologue than in the picture.

In laying out its exploitation campaign, the theatre publicity department considers the state of mind of prospective patrons, the newspaper conditions in the city, etc. What might appeal to an audience in a western city might not prove an effective exploitation angle in the east. In his work of exploitation, the publicity man is aided by the press book, a pamphlet accompanying the picture, containing much story and advertising matter and furnished by the publicity department of the studio, through the exchange.

The exhibitor governs his advertising appropriation by the

calibre of the attraction and the quality and quantity of the conscientious exhibitor's advertising is generally a reflection of his enthusiasm over the merits of the picture. A big picture demands an elaborate presentation and exploitation and the exhibitor must impress the public with the same idea which has been "sold" to him by the distributor.

Motion picture theatre advertising of today is no longer of the "circusy" type which in the beginning branded the motion picture as a cheap novelty. "Stunt" exploitation is still used largely. Whenever the exhibitor sees a way, by means of outdoor stunts or tie-ups, to arouse the interest of the public, he generally stages such stunts.

From the exhibitor's point of view, the ideal picture of the future is a good story by a well-known author, enacted by casts of more than one star and capable supporting players, cleverly directed by a real genius. The better class of showmen of today believe that the time is passed when a picture is a success because of the drawing power of one star, regardless of story, or of story, regardless of the talent enacting it, and the future success and elevation of the screen depends upon a consistent policy of fewer and better pictures in which real merit and not sensationalism is foremost. Under such conditions, a good picture should run two or three or more weeks instead of one, in the same way that a big play runs several weeks at a legitimate house.



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